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Of the War between Great Britain and the United States

1812—1815

By
Theodore Roosevelt

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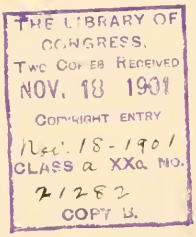

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NAVAL OPERATIONS OF THE WAR BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES*

1812-1815

OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

CAUSES of hostility — American unpreparedness — Jefferson's peace policy — Irritation engendered by facilities for naturalisation — The Milan and Berlin decrees, and the Orders in Council — Hardships brought about by the edicts — Cleveland's experiences — Basil Hall's testimony — British seamen in the American marine — American seamen pressed by the British — Berkeley's order — Affair of the *Leopard* and the *Chesapeake* — Jefferson's "commercial war" — Napoleon's duplicity — British blockade of the American coasts — Affair of the *President* and the *Little Belt* — Declaration of war — Indifference of the American people — British over-confidence — Efficiency of the United States navy — Ships of the United States — Tonnage and armament — Superiority of the American frigate — The American *personnel* — British seamen in the American navy — Poorness of British gunnery.

IT is often difficult to realise that, in a clash between two peoples, not only may each side deem itself right, but each side may really be right from its own standpoint. A healthy and vigorous nation must obey the law of self-preservation. When it is engaged in a life-and-death grapple with a powerful foe, it cannot too closely scan the damage it is incidentally forced to do neutral nations. On the other hand, it is just as little to be expected that

* Being Chapter xli. of *The Royal Navy, a History*, Vol. VI.

one of these neutral nations, when wronged, will refrain from retaliation merely because the injuries are inflicted by the aggressor as a regrettable, but necessary, incident of a conflict with some one else.

This holds true of the bickering war between Britain and America which closed the gigantic Napoleonic struggles. During nearly a quarter of a century of tremendous warfare, Britain and France stood as opposing champions in a struggle which dwarfed all previous contests and convulsed the entire civilised world. As has been seen, every other nation of Europe was at one time or another drawn into this struggle, and almost every other nation sided now with one, and now with the other, of the great central pair of combatants. Russia and Spain, Austria and Prussia, Holland and Turkey, appeared, now as the subservient allies, now as the bitter enemies, of Republican and Imperial France. The Island Monarchy alone never wavered, and never faltered. In the countless shifting coalitions framed against France, there was always one unshifting figure, that of Britain. Kaiser and King, Tsar and Cortes, might make war, or sue for peace; but, save for one brief truce, the people of Britain never for a moment relaxed that deadly strain of hostility which at last wore out even Napoleon's giant strength.

It was a life and death struggle; and to win, Britain had to spend her gold, her ships, and her men like water. Where she was thus lavish of her

own wealth and her own blood, it was not to be expected that she would pay over-scrupulous heed to the exact rights of others, above all if these rights were exercised seriously to her own disadvantage. While the fight stamped to and fro, the combatants were far too busy with one another to care whether or not they trampled on outsiders. In the grim, relentless, long-drawn warfare, neither side had any intention of throwing away a chance by quixotic over-regard for the rights of others; and both sides were at times seriously to blame for disregarding these rights on occasions when to regard them would not have been quixotic at all, but an evidence of sound common-sense.

The scarlet-clad armies of Britain played a great part in the closing years of the struggle, and developed as their leader the chief of all the generals who fought under or against Napoleon. Nevertheless it was the Navy of Britain, it was the British sea power, which threw the deciding weight into the contest. The British Navy destroyed the fleets of France and the fleets of the Spanish, Dutch, and Danish allies of France, and blockaded the French ports, and the ports of all powers that were not hostile to the French. In order to man the huge fleets with which she kept command of the seas, England was forced to try every expedient to gather sailors; and in order to make her blockade effective she had to lay a heavy hand on the ships of those neutral powers that found their profit in breaking the blockade.

The United States of America was the only neutral power which at once both tended to drain the British Navy of a certain number of its seamen, and at the same time offered in her own seamen a chance for that same Navy to make good the loss. Moreover, it was the one neutral nation which throve apace during the years of European warfare by trading with the hostile powers. So long as they were not too much harassed, the American merchants and seamen were greatly benefited by the war in Europe. The destruction of the French merchantmen by the British warships, and the constant harrying of the British merchantmen by the French privateers, tended to drive trade into neutral bottoms; and America was the only neutral nation prepared to profit greatly by this tendency. She made the loss of England her gain. Her merchants shipped cargoes to French ports; and her merchant captains, as their trade grew apace, and as they became short-handed, welcomed eagerly all British seamen, deserters or otherwise, who might take service under the American flag in the hope of avoiding the press-gang and the extreme severity of British naval discipline.

The Americans were merely exercising their rights; but naturally their attitude exasperated not only Britain, but also France. Each of the two main combatants was inclined to view with suspicion the neutral who made a cold-blooded profit out of the sufferings of both. Each took harsh, and often

entirely unjustifiable, measures to protect himself. Each in his action was guided very naturally by his own interests as he saw them. It was Britain with which America ultimately came to blows, because Britain possessed far greater power of inflicting injury; but, according to his capacity, Napoleon showed a much more callous disregard for American rights.

The British claimed the right to forbid vessels to sail to or from ports which they announced as blockaded, and to search neutral ships for contraband goods. They also acted upon the doctrine that "once a subject, always a subject," and that their warships could at any time take British sailors, wherever found, on the high seas. The intense vexation and heavy loss caused by the right of search need not be dwelt upon. The impressment of American seamen was an even more serious business. Thousands of British sailor-men were to be found on American vessels. Britain reclaimed these at every opportunity; but she did not rest content with this. Each British war vessel regarded itself as the judge as to whether the members of the crew of a searched vessel were British or Americans. If the captain of such a war vessel were short-handed, he was certain to resolve all doubts in his own favour; and, consequently, thousands of impressed Americans served, sorely against the grain, in British warships.

The whole situation was one that could not but provoke intense irritation. There was much fraud

in the naturalisation of British seamen as Americans; and, on the other hand, there was much brutal disregard of the rights of American sailors by British warships. The American merchant cared nothing for the contestants, save that he wanted to sell his goods where he could get the best price; while the British officer was determined that the American should not render help to France. From their respective standpoints, each nation had much to say in its own favour. Consistently with retaining her self-respect, America could not submit quietly to the injuries she received. On the other hand, Britain could not afford, because of any consideration of abstract right, to allow any neutral nation to furnish Napoleon with another weapon. War was almost inevitable.

At the time each people as a whole of course firmly believed that its own cause was entirely righteous, and that its opponents were without any moral justification for their acts; though the best-informed Englishmen, those who managed the councils of their country, evidently felt at bottom an uneasy sense that their course was not entirely justifiable, as was shown by the too tardy repeal of the Orders in Council. The difference in feeling caused by the difference of point of view was illustrated by the attitudes of the British and Americans towards one another in 1812 and 1862 respectively. In 1812 the bolder American merchants embarked eagerly in the career of running cargoes into the

ports of blockaded France, precisely as half a century later the British of the stamp of Hobart Pasha swarmed forward to command the blockade-runners which plied between the British ports and the ports of the Southern Confederacy. At the earlier date the Americans resisted and the British upheld the right of search; fifty years later it was the American, Wilkes, who exercised the right, while the British made ready for instant war unless the deed should be disavowed.

It was entirely natural that Great Britain should strive in every way possible to minimise the aid which America, by the exercise of her rights as a neutral, gave to France. It was equally natural that the more reckless and overbearing spirits among the British naval officers, while carrying out this policy, should do deeds that were entirely indefensible, and which could not but inflame the Americans to madness. No American ship was safe from confiscation, no American seaman was safe from impressment, either on the high seas, or on the American coast; and insult and outrage followed one another in monotonous succession.

The nation which submitted without war to such insults erred on the side of tame submission, not of undue truculence. But it must be remembered that France was all the time, according to her capacity, behaving quite as badly as Great Britain. Her sea strength had been shattered by Britain, so she could not do America anything like as much harm; but

no British Minister vied with Napoleon in vicious and treacherous disregard of the rights of both friend and foe. Nevertheless, France offered the chance of making money, and Britain did not. Britain could do her own carrying trade, while the carrying trade of France was largely in American bottoms. Many Americans were delighted to balance against the insults and injuries they received from the mighty combatants, the profits which flowed into their coffers only because the combat did not cease.

There was but one possible way by which to gain and keep the respect of either France or Britain: that was by the possession of power, and the readiness to use it if necessary; and power in this case meant a formidable fighting navy. Had America possessed a fleet of twenty ships of the line, her sailors could have plied their trade unmolested; and the three years of war, with its loss in blood and money, would have been avoided. From the merely monetary standpoint such a navy would have been the cheapest kind of insurance; and morally its advantages would have been incalculable, for every American worth the name would have lifted his head higher because of its existence. But unfortunately the nation lacked the wisdom to see this, and it chose and re-chose for the Presidency Thomas Jefferson, who avowed that his "passion was peace," and whose timidity surpassed even his philanthropy. Both Britain and America have produced men of the "peace at any price" pattern; and in America,

in one great crisis, at least, these men cost the nation more, in blood and wealth, than the political leaders most recklessly indifferent to war have ever cost it. There never was a better example of the ultimate evil caused by a timid effort to secure peace, through the sacrifice of honour and the refusal to make preparations for war, than that afforded by the American people under the Presidencies of Jefferson and Madison. The "infinite capacity of mankind to withstand the introduction of knowledge" is also shown by the fact that this lesson has not only been largely wasted, but has even been misread and misinterpreted. National vanity, and the party spirit which resolutely refuses to see crimes committed against the nation by party heroes, are partly responsible for this. The cultivation of a political philosophy which persistently refuses to accept facts as they are, and which in America is no dearer to the unlettered demagogue than to the educated, refined theorist whose knowledge of political affairs is evolved in the seclusion of his own parlour, has also operated to prevent Americans from learning the bitter lessons which should be taught from the war of 1812. The wealthy man who cares only for mercantile prosperity, and the cultivated man who forgets that nothing can atone for the loss of the virile fighting virtues, both also forget that, though war is an evil, an inglorious or unjustifiable peace is a worse evil. As for England, she knows little or nothing about the war, and so of course has been

equally blind to its lessons. In one way, however, England does not so much need to be taught these lessons, for there are few of her politicians or publicists of any note who fail to see the necessity of her possessing a navy more formidable than any other navy on the face of the globe.

These men had numerous prototypes in the first decade of the present century. The Federalists, who were crystallised into a party under Washington, did have some appreciation of the fact that peace is worth nothing unless it comes with sword girt on thigh. Accordingly, in 1798 and 1799, under the spur of the quasi-war with France and the depredations of the Moorish pirates, the Federalists set out to build a navy. They only made a beginning. The people behind them were too ignorant and too short-sighted to permit the building of the great ships of the line which could alone decide a war; but they did build half a dozen frigates, which were the best of their kind in existence. In 1801, however, the Jeffersonian democrats came into power, and all work on the navy stopped forthwith. Jefferson hated and dreaded war; and he showed the true spirit of the non-military visionary in striving to find some patent substitute for war, or, if war could not be avoided, then some patent substitute for the armies and fleets by which war must be fought. Fatuously unable to learn the lesson taught by the revolutionary contest, he hoped to find in levies of untrained militia a substitute for

a regular army. As for the navy, he at one time actually hoped to supply its place by a preposterous system of what may be called horse-gunboats, that is, gunboats which could be drawn ashore and carried on wheeled vehicles to any point menaced by a hostile fleet. Men who get discouraged by the attitude of latter-day politicians may draw some hope and comfort from the reflection that the nation actually lived through the experiment of trying Jefferson's ideas. Nevertheless, the trial of this same experiment caused bitter loss and mortification.

At the present day no student of international law would justify the attitude of Great Britain in the quarrel; but the international standard was different among nations at the beginning of the nineteenth century; and, moreover, Great Britain was fighting for her life, and nice customs curtesy to great crises as well as to great kings.

The United States was still primarily a country of dwellers on the sea-coast. The bulk of the population lay along the Atlantic seaboard. There were but three states west of the Alleghanies — Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio; and all three were still frontier commonwealths. From Salem to Savannah the men of every seaport city — and as yet there were no cities of note which were not seaports — looked upon foreign trade as the surest means to wealth and social distinction. American shipwrights were already famous: readers of that delightful book, 'Tom Cringle's Log,' will recall at once the way in which

Scott speaks of the swift American schooners; and their full-rigged ships also were among the best of their kind on the ocean. Under the stimulus given by the European war to their trade the merchants embarked more and more eagerly in foreign ventures, and ships were turned out of the yards in ever-increasing numbers. From Maine to Maryland there was a hardy population of sailor-folk, who manned, not only the merchantmen, but also the fishing-fleet and the whalers that went to the North Atlantic and the South Seas. Under the abnormal growth of the American merchant marine, however, the growth of the sailor population was outstripped, and it became impossible to man American ships purely with American seamen. Seamen are roving creatures at all times, and in every country they shift readily from one flag to another. Seafarers from various European states, notably from Portugal and the Scandinavian countries, found their way in numbers aboard the American ships; but it was the sailors of the British Islands who formed the chief resource in making up any deficiency in the numbers of the native Americans. The needs of Britain's gigantic Navy were very great, and every method was resorted to in order to keep level its quota of men. Life on a British warship was hard, and the British seamen lived in terror of the press-gang. Readers of Marryat's novels will remember the large part this institution played in the sea life of that period.

Wages on board the American ships were high, and the service not particularly severe. In consequence, British seamen entered the American merchant marine literally by thousands. The easy naturalisation laws of the country were even more easily circumvented. There was very little difficulty indeed in any British seaman getting naturalisation papers as an American. The captains of British war vessels were continually meeting in the American ports scores of British seamen who passed them by with insolent defiance, confident in their possession of American naturalisation papers.

Seeing that this occurred at the very time when American trading ships were crippling their British rivals by their competition, and were furnishing supplies to Britain's dreaded and hated rival, the anger alike of British Government officials, of British merchants, and of British naval officers, can be readily understood. It was sufficiently irritating to see an American ship carry to a French port goods which the British wished to keep out of that port, and which, in happier circumstances, might have been in a British bottom; but it was still more exasperating to know that this very ship might number among her crew a considerable proportion of British seamen, at a time when the British fleets needed every man they could crimp or press. Moreover, such a system of neutral trade and of easy naturalisation put a premium upon perjury, and the British grew to look with suspicion upon every

statement of an American merchant master, and every paper produced by an American merchant seaman.

The French had little in the way of a grievance against the Americans. Very few French seamen served under the American flag, certainly not enough to be of any consequence to the French navy. The French trade that was driven into American bottoms would otherwise have been extinguished. On the other hand, American merchantmen performed a real service to France when they entered the French ports. There was one point, however, on which the American attitude was precisely as exasperating to France as to Britain, and for the same reason. As regards their dealings with the insurgent negroes of Haiti and with the effort to blockade the Haitian ports, the French stood toward the Americans just as Britain stood toward them in regard to France. In each case the American merchants showed, as might have been expected, the same desire to send their cargoes to the people who wished to pay for them, without regard to the rights or wrongs of any struggle in which these people might be engaged. The Americans sent small fleets of merchantmen to carry goods to the negroes in Haiti, who were engaged in a life and death fight with the French, just as they sent far larger fleets of merchantmen to carry goods to the French, in their deadly grapple with the British ; and the French felt as aggrieved in the one case as the British did in the other.

But the case of Haiti was exceptional. Speaking generally, no harm, and, on the contrary, much good, resulted to France from the American neutral trade. Nevertheless, Napoleon adopted toward the Americans a course quite as brutal as the British attitude, and more treacherous. In this he was mainly actuated by a desire to force the Americans into war with Great Britain; but he was swayed by various and complicated motives from time to time — motives which it would be impossible to discuss at proper length here. The intentions of the French people toward the American Republic, as shown by the actions of the French Emperor, were as bad as could be.

The policy of the two nations towards America was promulgated in a series of edicts — those of Napoleon taking the form of Decrees dated at Milan, Berlin, and elsewhere; and those of the advisers of King George appearing as Orders in Council. At different times widely different interpretations were put upon every decree and order, according to the strenuousness of the American protest, and the degree of exasperation of Britain or France. Napoleon in particular, whenever it suited him, interpreted his own decrees in a sense directly opposite to their palpable purport; or, if there was a momentary gain in view, simply denied that he had ever issued them. In Britain the followers of Fox were supposed to be more friendly to America than the followers of Pitt. In theory they were; but in

practice the attitudes of the two parties were not materially different. The essential features of the Orders in Council were, that they prohibited American ships from trading with France, unless they first cleared from some British port; and they declared the coast of most of continental Europe to be blockaded, and provided for the seizure of American vessels bound thither. They also imposed similar restrictions upon the very lucrative trade of America with the West Indian Islands. Napoleon's decrees, on the other hand, provided that any American vessel which touched at a British port, or submitted to search by a British cruiser, should be treated as hostile, and be confiscated accordingly. Each nation asserted its right to claim its own seamen, as a matter of course.

These two series of edicts, if fully carried out, meant the absolute annihilation of the American merchant marine, so far as foreign commerce was concerned, for almost every country in the world was engaged on one side or the other in the Napoleonic struggles. In point of intent, the action of the French was a little the worse; and some of Napoleon's seizures of American vessels in European ports were marked by a bad faith which made them peculiarly repulsive. The attitude of each nation amply warranted America in declaring war on both. This was the course which was actually proposed in Congress, and which should have been followed. But it was perhaps too much to expect that the

struggling transatlantic republic, which, in point of regular navy and army, hardly ranked as a fifth-class power, should at the same time throw down the glove to the two greatest empires of the world. Moreover, the Americans very naturally cared much less what the French and British meant to do, than what they actually did; and when it came to doing, the British were vastly better fitted than the French to carry out their threats.

French privateers and cruisers occasionally mishandled an American vessel, and both ships and cargoes were confiscated when in French ports, sometimes even on a large scale; but it was not for the self-interest of the French to molest overmuch the only neutrals who could bring them the goods of which they stood in need; and there was practically no trouble about the French impressing seamen from American ships, because there were very few Frenchmen in these ships, and those few could not hope to disguise their nationality. The American seaman was inclined to look down upon the French, but he had not much cause either to fear or hate them.

With the British, all this was different. In the first place, the Englishman cordially disliked the American, because the American was feeding his foes, and was robbing him both of his men and of his trade. The fraudulent naturalisation of British seamen was carried on openly in most American ports; and the American flag was used to protect,

not merely American skippers engaged in carrying goods, which the British said should not be carried, to France, but also not a few Frenchmen and Spaniards, and a larger number of recreant Britons, who wished to share the profits of the business. The British ships of war were chronically undermanned, and every commander had good reason to believe that almost all American merchant vessels contained some British seamen to whose service he felt he was lawfully entitled. It was an article of faith with him, as with his country, that he had a right to take these seamen wherever he found them on the ocean. As a rule he disliked, and half despised, the Americans;[1] he was puzzled and angered by the chicanery of fraudulent naturalisation papers and the like wherewith they sought to baffle him; and in revenge he took refuge in brutality. He was himself the judge as to whether or not he was satisfied in regard to the nationality of any given seaman; and he always gave himself the benefit of the doubt — even when there was no

[1] Although a feeling of dislike for one another may have animated officers and men on both sides, such feeling was by no means universal; and there are many examples of warm private friendships having subsisted before the war between British and American naval officers, and having been continued after it, even in spite of hostile meetings having occurred during the conflict. A notable example of this kind of friendship is to be found in the long and affectionate intimacy which subsisted between Captain Isaac Hull, U. S. N., and Captain James Richard Dacres (2), R.N., an intimacy heightened rather than decreased by the conduct of both on the occasion of the capture of the *Guerrière* by the *Constitution*. — W. L. C.

doubt. Not only did he impress British seamen who had been fraudulently naturalised as Americans, but quite as often he impressed British seamen who had been properly naturalised and were American citizens, and, even more often, American citizens who were such by birth, and not merely by adoption. The two peoples could not always with entire certainty be told apart; and when the British captain was short-handed he did not endeavour to tell them apart. Many thousands of British seamen served in the American merchant marine; but there were several thousand American seamen who had been impressed into British ships of war. One of the commonest incidents of the time was for an American merchantman to be left helpless on the high seas, unable to reach her port of destination, because the majority of the crew had been taken off by some British man-of-war.

In one of Cooper's sea novels, 'Miles Wallingford,' the action of the story centres upon the experience of an American merchant captain with a British frigate and a French privateer; and, like many another good novel, it is as essentially true to life as any professed history. When not long from New York the ship was overhauled by a British frigate and sent into a British port as a prize, on the ground that she was sailing for a German port under French influence, and that there was some doubt as to the cargo papers; while most of the crew, Americans and foreigners alike, were taken aboard the frigate.

By surprise, the remaining Americans recaptured the ship from the British prize crew, only to have their ship overhauled anew by a French privateer, and again declared to be a prize, upon the ground of having been previously captured by the British. The Americans once more succeeded in regaining possession of the vessel; but, having only four hands with which to work her, she was cast away; so that the voyage ended with the ruin of the owner of the ship, and the impressment of her entire crew.

This particular incident only occurred in a novel; but it was of a kind which occurred hundreds of times in actual life. It was but rarely that an American merchant captain of that day did any writing; yet one out of the very many Salem ship-masters has left a record of his ocean trips at the end of the last and the beginning of the present centuries.[1] He usually owned the ship he navigated, and her cargo also; and he sailed at different times to the chief ports of Europe and Asia, and also to many a coast where the ports were open roadsteads and the inhabitants bloodthirsty savages. He was able to hold his own against mutineers, savages, and pirates; but he was twice brought to ruin by civilised France and Great Britain.

In 1807, when trading to the West Indies, after having already been repeatedly searched by British

[1] 'Voyages of an American Navigator.' By Richard J. Cleveland, pp. 124, 143.

cruisers, he was taken by Rear-Admiral the Hon. A. F. I. Cochrane, and his ship was condemned by a rascally little court at Tortola, whither he was sent because a more respectable court would doubtless have released him. The confiscation of his goods stripped him to the bone, so that he had to begin life over again; and, in writing of the event in after years, he remarked: "Compelled to navigate for the support of my family, and deprived in consequence of superintending the education of my children, worn with anxiety and sick at heart with hope deferred, it will be seen that I was for many years an exile from all that rendered life dear and desirable; and this as a consequence of the robbery of my hard earned fortune by Admiral Cochrane."

Two years later he again got a ship, which he took to Naples, whither he was enticed, with a number of other American merchantmen, by one of the treacherous proclamations of Napoleon. Having got the ships into his power, Napoleon, acting through Murat, had them all seized and confiscated, without even the formality of a trial. In comparing the two disasters the sufferer commented upon the difference between them as being of not much more consequence than the distinction between "the act of the highwayman who demands your money at the muzzle of a pistol, and that of the swindler who robs you under the form of law." The marvel is, not that such outrages were resented, but that they were ever endured.

No better description of the attitude of the two parties, British and American, toward one another was ever given than is contained in the writings of a most gallant British officer, Captain Basil Hall, R.N. In 1831 he published two little volumes of 'Voyages and Travels,' which contained a chapter called 'Blockading a Neutral Port.' In this he described what he saw when a midshipman on board the fifty-gun ship *Leander*, while she was lying off New York harbour, to carry out the instructions of the British Government as to supervising the American trade with France. I quote at some length, condensing a little, from his description because it is the best ever given by a responsible authority of what really occurred under the Orders in Council; and it is written with entire good temper and truthfulness: —

"The blockading service at any time is a tedious one; but upon this occasion we contrived to enliven it in a manner which, whether legitimate or not, was certainly highly exciting, and sometimes rather profitable, to us.

"With the outward bound vessels we had little to do, but with those which came from foreign parts, especially from France, then our bitter enemy, we took the liberty — the American said the improper liberty. The ships we meddled with, so much to the displeasure of the Americans, were those which, to outward appearance, belonged to citizens of the United States, but on board which we had reason, good or bad, to suspect there was cargo owned by the enemy. Nothing appears to be so easy as to forge a ship's papers or to swear false oaths; and, accordingly, a

great deal of French property was imported into America in vessels certainly belonging to the United States, but covered, as it was called, by documents implying an American or neutral right in it. In the very same way, I suppose, much Spanish property was for a long course of years imported into South America in English bottoms when Spain was at war with her colonies. England in that case acted the part of a neutral, and learned in like manner for the lucre of gain to trifle with all the obligations of an oath. The adroit neutral, by watching his time, can always minister to the several necessities of the combatants, sometimes to one and sometimes to the other, according as the payment is good or bad, and in such a manner as to be sure of his own profit, reckless at whose cost. At the same time he must naturally lay his account with provoking the displeasure of the powers at war, who in their turn will, of course, do all they possibly can to prevent the neutral from lending assistance to their opponents respectively.

"Conflicting nations accordingly have always claimed, and, when they can, will never cease to enforce, this right of searching neutral ships in order to discover whether or not there be enemies' property on board.

"Every morning at daybreak during our stay off New York we set about arresting the progress of all vessels we saw, firing off guns to the right and left, to make every ship that was running in heave to, or wait until we had leisure to send a boat on board 'to see,' in our lingo, 'what she was made of.' I have frequently known a dozen, and sometimes a couple of dozen, ships lying a league or two off the port, losing their fair wind, their tide, and, worse than all, their market for many hours, sometimes the whole day, before our search was completed. I am not now inquiring whether all this was right, or whether it was even necessary, but simply describing the fact.

"When any circumstances in the ship's papers looked suspicious, the boarding officer brought the master and his documents to the *Leander*, where they were further examined by the Captain; and, if anything more important was then elicited by the examination of the parties or their papers to justify the idea that the cargo was French and not American, as was pretended, the ship was forthwith detained. She was then manned with an English crew from the ships of war and ordered off to Halifax, to be there tried in the Admiralty Court.

"One can easily conceive how this sort of proceeding, in every possible case, must be vexatious to the neutral. If the cargo be all the while, *bonâ fide*, the property of the neutral whose flag it is sailing under, the vexation caused by this interruption to the voyage is excessive. In the event of restoration or acquittal, the owner's loss, it is said, is seldom, if ever, adequately compensated for by the awarded damages.

"We detained, at that period, a good many American vessels on the ground of having French or Spanish property on board. Three or four, I remember, were restored to their owners by the decision of the Admiralty Court; and two of them were forcibly recaptured by the Americans on their way to Halifax. On board one of these ships the master and the few hands left in her to give evidence at the trial rose in the night, overpowered the prize master and his crew, nailed down the hatches, and having put the helm up, with the wind on land, gained the coast before the scale of authority could be turned.

"There was another circumstance, connected with our proceedings at that time, of still more serious annoyance to the Americans, and one requiring in its discussion still greater delicacy of handling. I need hardly mention that I allude to the impressment of those seamen who were found

serving on board American merchant ships, but who were known to be English subjects. It seems quite clear that, while we can hold it, we will never give up the right of search, or the right of impressment. We may, and ought certainly to, exercise so disagreeable a power with such temper and discretion as not to provoke the enmity of any friendly nation. But at the time I speak of, and on board our good old ship the *Leander*, whose name I was grieved, but not surprised, to find was still held in detestation three or four and twenty years afterwards at New York, I am sorry to own we had not much of this discretion in our proceedings; or, rather, we had not enough consideration for the feelings of the people we were dealing with. We have since learned to respect them more — or, as they prefer to express it, they have since taught us to respect them: be it either way, it matters not much; and if it please the Americans more to say they have instructed us in this point of good manners, than to allow that we have come to a knowledge of better habits, well and good.

"To place the full annoyance of these matters in a light to be viewed fairly by English people: let us suppose that the Americans and French were to go to war, and that England for once remained neutral, and that an American squadron stationed itself off Liverpool. If the American ships were to detain off the port, within a league or so of the lighthouse, every British ship coming from France or from a French colony; and if, besides looking over the papers of these ships to see whether all was regular, they were to open every private letter in the hope of detecting some trace of French ownership in the cargo what should we say? If, out of twenty ships, one or two were to be completely diverted from their course from time to time, and sent off under a prize master to New York for adjudication, I wonder how the Liverpool folks would like it?

Conceive, for instance, that the American squadron employed to blockade the French ships in Liverpool were short-handed, but, from being in daily expectation of bringing their enemy to action, it had become an object of great consequence with them to get their ships manned. And suppose, likewise, that it was perfectly notorious to all parties that on board every English ship, arriving or sailing from the port in question, there were several American citizens calling themselves Englishmen, and having in their possession 'protections' or certificates to that effect sworn to in regular form, but all known to be false. If the American man-of-war, off the English port, were then to fire at and stop every ship, and, besides overhauling her papers and cargo, were to take out any seamen, to work their own guns withal, whom they had reason, or supposed, or said they had reason, to consider American citizens, or whose country they guessed from dialect or appearance, I wish to know with what degree of patience this would be submitted to on the Exchange at Liverpool, or anywhere else in England.

"In putting a parallel case to ours off New York, and supposing Liverpool to be blockaded by the Americans, on the ground of having to watch some French ships, I omitted to throw in one item which is necessary to complete the parallel. In 1804, when we were blockading the French frigates in New York, a casual shot from the *Leander* hit an unfortunate ship's mainboom; and the broken spar, striking the mate, John Peirce by name, killed him instantly. The sloop sailed on to New York, where the mangled body, raised on a platform, was paraded through the streets in order to augment the vehement indignation, already at a high pitch, against the English. Now, let us be candid to our rivals, and ask whether the Americans would have been worthy of our friendship, or even of our hostility, had they

tamely submitted to indignities which, if passed upon ourselves, would have roused not only Liverpool, but the whole country into a towering passion of nationality?"

The British Minister, Erskine, laid the situation fairly before his Government, writing to them that American ill-will was naturally excited by the "insulting behaviour" of British captains "in the very harbours and waters of the United States," while the whole coast was blockaded as if in time of war, and every American ship vigorously searched in sight of the shore.[1]

According to the best estimate, some twenty-five hundred British seamen were drawn annually into the American merchant marine; and, on the other hand, about a thousand seamen, supposed to be British, but in large part American, were impressed from American merchantmen by British warships every year; while hundreds of these merchantmen were seized by British cruisers, not merely on the high seas, but within gunshot of the American coast. The Americans clamoured in anger, but took no effectual steps in retaliation. The seafaring people were willing to risk a war; but the merchants were not, for, after all, the neutral trade was very remunerative, and, inasmuch as they pocketed the profits, they were willing to pocket the accompanying insults and injuries. Even the outrages on the coast met with no more response than the tedious

[1] Adams, iv. 143.

protests of diplomacy, and an occasional outburst of indignation in some town which refused for the moment to furnish provisions to a peculiarly offensive British frigate. It could hardly be deemed very spirited retaliation, this refusal to give green vegetables to the men who slew or imprisoned American citizens. But finally something occurred which really did rouse the whole nation, for the British suddenly extended their theory of the right of search so as to include, not merely the merchant vessels, but the warships of the United States.

The British ships on the American coast were under the command of Vice-Admiral the Hon. George Cranfield Berkeley, who was stationed at Halifax. Desertions were rife from among these ships, and, indeed, were not infrequent from the American ships themselves. Naturally, whenever a British ship was lying off an American port, the American seamen aboard her were eager for a chance to get ashore and desert; and some of the British seamen were delighted to follow suit. In 1807 the Admiral issued an order reciting the fact that a certain number of deserters had escaped from various British vessels, which he enumerated, and directed the captains of the ships under him to reclaim these deserters wherever found; specifically ordering them to search even an American man-of-war which might be suspected of having them aboard. At that time a British squadron, including both two-deckers and frigates, lay off Norfolk. When they

received the news, the American frigate *Chesapeake* was about to put to sea. She had aboard her one of the deserters alluded to, and the 50-gun ship *Leopard*, Captain Salusbury Pryce Humphreys, was despatched to overhaul her and reclaim him.

The *Chesapeake* rated thirty-eight guns, and on this voyage carried forty. She was inferior in strength to the *Leopard*, about in the proportion that a 38-gun frigate was inferior to a 44; that is, the inferiority was not such as to warrant her striking without resistance. The *Chesapeake* was under the command of Captain James Barron when she put out; and, of course, neither he nor any one else aboard her dreamed that there was the slightest fear of attack from the British ships which were lying at anchor or cruising in the harbour. The *Chesapeake's* decks were lumbered up, and none of her guns were ready for action, for they were without gunlocks, and could only be fired by means of slow matches, or of firing-irons previously heated in the fire. When the *Leopard* approached, Barron still felt no suspicion of the errand on which she came, and he was dumbfounded when he was informed of the purpose to search his ship. It was, of course, a proposition to which no naval officer who did not wish to be hanged for cowardice or treason could submit; and Barron refused. After a few minutes' hesitation, he began to prepare for defence; but, long before the preparations were completed, the *Leopard* opened fire. After submitting to three

broadsides, which killed or wounded twenty-one men, the *Chesapeake* struck. She had been able to fire in return but a single gun, which Lieutenant William Henry Allen discharged by means of a hot coal which he brought in his hands from the galley. The British then boarded her, and took out four deserters from British ships, three of these deserters being Americans, and only one a British subject; and the *Chesapeake* returned to port in an agony of shame and rage. Captain Barron was court-martialled, but was acquitted of all charges save neglect to utilise fully the short period given him by the *Leopard* in which to make ready for the fight. Decatur, however, always considered him more blameworthy than was shown by the judgment; and in after life the quarrel between the two men gave rise to a duel in which Decatur was slain.

The event was a terrible tragedy; but one touch of comedy was supplied by Admiral Berkeley's letter approving the deed. In this he warned Captain Humphreys, of the *Leopard*, not to pay heed to American criticism of a feat which was as lawless as any deed of piracy ever committed on the high seas, because he "must make allowances for the heated state of the populace in a country where law, and every tie both civil and religious, is treated so lightly." [1]

Such an outrage convulsed the whole country for the moment, and spurred to action even Jefferson,

[1] Marshall, 'Naval Biography,' ii. 895.

the most timid and least warlike of presidents; but Jefferson, even when angry, was utterly unable to uphold the honour or dignity of the nation in any dispute with a foreign power. Though he led the people wrong, it must be remembered that they were more than willing to follow his lead; for the Americans of that day lacked national feeling, and were possessed of a party spirit rendered more than usually ignoble because of the fact that the rival factions fought under the badges of France and England, and considered all American questions solely from the standpoint of the foreign nation whose interests they happened to champion. The President, the Congress, and the people as a whole all showed an unworthy dread of the appeal to arms.

Instead of declaring war, Jefferson put in practice one of his favourite schemes, that of commercial war, as he called it. In other words, he declared an embargo on all American shipping, refusing to allow any of it to leave American ports, and hoping thus so to injure the interests of England and France as to force them to refrain from injuring America: a futile hope, rightly destined to meet with the failure which should attend the efforts of men and of nations that lack that most elementary and needful of all virtues, the orderly courage of the soldier. The temper of Jefferson's mind, and the extraordinary military foolishness of the American people as a whole, may be gathered from the fact

that, in preparing for war, all he could suggest was that the ships of war should be laid up so as not to tempt the enemy to capture them; and that the United States should rely upon the worthless militia on shore, and the flotillas of equally worthless gunboats along the coast.[1] The British Government, through Canning, disavowed Berkeley's act and recalled him, but accompanied the disavowal with requests and demands in connection with the Orders in Council which were in themselves almost as great insults. Jefferson could not make his embargo work. It did some damage to Great Britain and France, but by no means enough to force either to yield, while it wrought such ruin in America as very nearly to bring about a civil war. It was a mean and ignoble effort to avoid war; and it spoke ill for its promoters that they should prefer it to the manlier course which would have appealed to all really brave and generous natures. At the very end of his administration Jefferson was forced to submit to the repeal of his pet measure, and the substitution of a non-intercourse act, which merely forbad vessels to sail direct to France or England: a measure which, if it accomplished no more good, at least did very much less harm.

The British Government resolutely declined to withdraw the Orders in Council, or to abandon the impressment of seamen from American ships; but, inasmuch as the measures taken by the American

[1] Adams, iv. 159.

government bore equally heavily against France and Britain, they ceased to blockade the American ports, or to exercise the right of search on the American coasts; for they insisted that America must not favour France at the expense of Britain, and hope to escape retaliation. An interminable diplomatic wrangle followed, the British and the French alike accusing the Americans of favouring their opponents; and the Americans endeavouring to persuade each set of combatants that its conduct was worse than that of the other, and should be abandoned. Finally, in 1810, Napoleon made in the last and worst of his decrees certain changes which the Americans thought were equivalent to a repeal. Napoleon and his administrators were steeped in such seething duplicity, mendacity, and corruption, that negotiations with the French at that period afforded a peculiarly difficult problem. He allowed one set of public officials to issue mandates showing that the repeal of the decrees was real, and he permitted action to be taken in accordance with these mandates; while another set of officers, or even the same set on some other occasion, might ignore the alleged repeal and enforce the original decrees. Just prior to going through the form of a pretended repeal, he had enforced a sweeping confiscation of American ships by an act of gross treachery, and he evaded making restitution for this: while, later, one of his squadrons burned American merchant vessels at sea. However, on the assumption that the repeal

of the obnoxious decrees had been declared, the American government discontinued the operation of the non-intercourse law as against France. Thereupon the British Government, insisting that the decrees had really not been repealed, renewed the blockade of the American coast, and there began once more the familiar series of outrages; American ships being confiscated, and American sailors impressed, off the mouth of American harbours, and within gunshot of the American shore. Even the greed of gain, and the timidity of the doctrinaire politicians who believed in a conquest to be achieved purely by peace, could not withstand this, and the war spirit rose steadily among the American people; although without that accompaniment of forethought, and of resolute, intelligent preparation, the lack of which tends to make war spirit merely bluster.

At the time the conduct of the French was in intention rather worse than that of the English, and the damage which the French inflicted on the property within their clutches was almost as great; but they had made a pretence of repealing the obnoxious decrees, whereas Great Britain positively declined to repeal the Orders in Council, or to abandon the right of impressment. Moreover, what was far more important, the French were remote and could not do the damage they wished, whereas the British warships were in sight of the American coast, and their actions were the every-day theme of indignant comment. In such circumstances it was inevitable that

the people, smarting under their wrongs, should feel inclined to revenge them against the nearer and more obvious aggressor; though this did not excuse the American government for the failure to take a stand as decided against France as against Great Britain.

In 1811 there occurred another collision between armed ships of the two nations. The great frigate, *President*, under the command of Captain John Rodgers, encountered the British sloop of war *Little Belt*, under the command of Commander Arthur Batt Bingham, not very far from the scene of the *Chesapeake's* humiliation. The encounter took place at night, under a misunderstanding which each alleged to be the fault of the other. Shots were exchanged, and a regular fight, lasting about a quarter of an hour, took place, when the *Little Belt*, which was not of a quarter the force of her antagonist,[1] was of course silenced, having thirty-two of her men either killed or wounded. Not a man was touched on board the *President*.[2] Each accused the other of having fired the first shot and brought on the action. But, taking into account the great disparity in force between the combatants, and the further fact that Rodgers carried a letter of instructions from the Secretary

[1] The *Little Belt* carried eighteen 32-pr. carronades and two 9-prs., with a complement of 121 men and boys; the *President*, a "44-gun" frigate, seems to have mounted thirty-two 24-prs. and twenty-four 42-pr. carronades. — W. L. C.

[2] Rodgers's letter, May 23rd, 1811; Secretary Hamilton to Rodgers, June 9th, 1810; Bingham's letter, May 23rd, 1811.

of the Navy, which, in effect, directed him to err on the side of aggressiveness rather than to run any risk of a repetition of the *Chesapeake* affair, it is difficult not to come to the conclusion that the *President* was the offender. The incident deeply exasperated the British captains along the coast, while it put the Americans in high feather. They accepted it as an offset to the *Chesapeake* affair, and no longer dwelt much upon the need of redress for the latter.

All of this really rendered war inevitable; but as the American government grew more, the British Government grew less, ready to appeal to the sword. Finally, in June 1812, Madison sent in his declaration of war, the two chief grievances alleged being the right of search and the impressment of seamen. Almost at the same time, and therefore too late to do any good, the British Government repealed the Orders in Council: a step which, if taken a year before, would not only have prevented war, but very possibly would have made America declare war on France.

Deeply to the national discredit, the American government and people had made no adequate preparation for the conflict into which they plunged. The statesmen who had been in control of the administration for the last dozen years, Jefferson and his followers, were utterly incompetent to guard the national honour when menaced by a foreign Power. They were painfully unable to plan or carry out proper measures for national defence. The younger

democratic-republican leaders, men like Clay and Calhoun, were unlike their elders in being willing to fight, but they had not the slightest conception what war meant, or how to meet the formidable foe to whom they had thrown down the glove. Instead of keeping quiet and making preparations, they made no preparations, and indulged in vainglorious boastings, Clay asserting that the militia of Kentucky alone would conquer Canada; and Calhoun, that the conquest would be made almost without an effort. The memory of these boasts must have cost bitter mortification to the authors a couple of years later. The people as a whole deserved just the administrative weakness with which they were cursed by their chosen rulers. Had Jefferson and the other leaders of popular opinion been wiser and firmer men, they could have led the people to make better preparations; but the people themselves did not desire wiser or better leadership. The only party which had ever acted with dignity in foreign affairs, or taken proper measures for the national defence and national honour, was the party of the Federalists; and the Federalists had sunk into a seditious faction, especially in New England, where discontent with the war reached a treasonable pitch before it ended.

Though at the last the British Government had seemed reluctant to go into the war, anticipating no good from it, no question as to the result crossed the mind of any British statesman, soldier, or sailor.

The *Morning Post*, the organ of the Government, expressed the general feeling when it said in an inspired article that "a war of a very few months, without creating to" (England) "the expense of a single additional ship, would be sufficient to convince" (America) "of her folly by a necessary chastisement of her insolence and audacity." [1] Indeed, there was one factor which both sides agreed at the outset could be neglected, and that was the American navy. The British could hardly be said to have considered it at all; and American statesmen so completely shared the British belief in British invulnerability at sea, that there was a general purpose to lay up the American ships in port; and this course was only prevented by the striking victories with which the navy opened its career.

The American navy itself did not in the least share the feelings of its friends and foes. The officers knew that their ships were, on the whole, better built and better armed than any foreign ships of their classes; and they had entire confidence in their own training and courage, and in the training and courage of the men under them. The navy had been in existence only fourteen years. It was probably fortunate that the service of none of the officers extended back to the revolutionary struggle, when the American warships were really, for the most part, merely ill-disciplined privateers. The first experience of the navy, in the struggle with

[1] *Morning Post*, November 12th, 1807.

France, had been honourable. A French frigate and corvette were captured in single fight, while the West Indian seas were almost cleared of French privateers, and no American vessel was lost. Then came the war with the Barbary States, which lasted four years, and was a still better training school; for though it was mostly a wearisome blockade, yet there were bombardments, single ship encounters — in which the vessels of the Moorish pirates were captured — and desperate cutting-out expeditions, in which the Yankee cutlass proved an over-match for the Moorish scimitar. It was in that war that the commanders who later won distinction against the lords of the sea, gained their first experience of hard and dangerous fighting, and of commanding men in action. They improved the experience thus gained by careful training in time of peace.

In 1812 the American navy regarded itself with intelligent and resolute self-confidence. The people at large not merely failed to possess this confidence, but also showed criminal negligence in refusing to build up a navy. The very Congress which declared for war actually voted down a bill to increase the navy by twelve battleships and twenty frigates. The Federalists supported the proposition, but the great bulk of the dominant party, though clamorous for war, yet declined to take the steps which alone could have justified their clamour; and in so doing they represented only too well the people behind them. Their conduct was humiliating to the na-

tional honour: it was a crime, and it left a stain on the national character and reputation. Contempt is the emotion of all others which a nation should be least willing to arouse; and contempt was aroused by the attitude of those Americans who, in 1812 and before, refused to provide an adequate navy, and declined to put the country into shape which should render it fit for self-defence. There are plenty of philanthropists and politicians in the America of to-day who show the same timid, short-sighted folly, and supine indifference to national honour; nor is the breed wholly lacking in England.

In 1812 the navy of the United States, exclusive of two or three condemned hulks and a score or so of worthless gunboats, consisted of the following vessels:—

Rate. (Guns.)	Name.	Class.	Date of Building.	Tonnage.
44	*United States*	Frigate	1797	1576
44	*Constitution*	,,	1797	1576
44	*President*	,,	1800	1576
38	*Constellation*	,,	1797	1265
38	*Congress*	,,	1799	1268
38	*Chesapeake*	,,	1799	1244
32	*Essex*	,,	1799	860
28	*Adams*	Corvette	1799	560
18	*Hornet*	Ship-sloop	1805	480
18	*Wasp*	,,	1806	450
16	*Argus*	Brig-sloop	1803	298
16	*Syren*	,,	1803	250
14	*Nautilus*	,,	1803	185
14	*Vixen*	,,	1803	185
12	*Enterprise*	Brig	1799	165
12	*Viper*	,,	1810	148

Tonnage was at that time reckoned arbitrarily in several different ways. One of the tricks of naval writers of the period, on both sides, was to compute the tonnage differently for friendly and foreign ships, thus making out the most gratifying disparity in size, for the benefit of the national vanity.[1]

The four smallest brigs were worthless craft originally altered from schooners. The other twelve vessels were among the best of their respective classes afloat. At that time there were two kinds of guns in use in all navies: the long gun and the carronade. The carronade was short and light, but of large calibre. At long ranges it was useless; at short ranges, owing to the greater weight of the shot, it was much more useful than a long gun of less calibre. American sloops and brigs were armed only with carronades, save for two long bow-chasers; frigates were armed with long guns on the main-deck, and with carronades and two long bow-chasers on the quarter-deck and forecastle, or what the

1 The British method of computing tonnage being different from the American, and even the methods of measurement being different, it is not possible to make an absolutely accurate comparison of the tonnage of the combatants. According to the British methods, the American frigates would measure from 100 to 150 tons less than the figures given above. I have discussed the matter fully in the appendix to my 'Naval War of 1812.' James, the British historian, is one of the writers who, especially in dealing with the lake flotillas, adopts different standards for the two sides; and his latest editor has attempted to justify him, by ignoring the fact that the question is, not as to the accuracy of James's figures by any one standard, but as to his using two different standards as if they were the same.

Americans called the spar-deck. The only exception to this rule was the *Essex*, which was armed with forty 32-pr. carronades and six long 12's. In comparing the relative force of any pair of combatants, the most important item is the relative weight of metal in broadside; but, in considering this, allowance must always be made for the difference between carronades and long guns, the latter being, relatively to their calibre, much more powerful and efficient weapons. The annalist of each side usually omits all considerations of this kind when they tell against their own people.

The only other class of ocean vessels used by the Americans during the war may as well be alluded to here. It consisted of a class of fine ship-sloops, of 509 tons, each carrying twenty-two guns, which put to sea in 1814.

Almost all the American ships carried more guns than they rated. The 44-gun frigate usually carried fifty-four, consisting of thirty long 24's on the main-deck, and on the spar-deck two long bow-chasers, and either twenty or twenty-two carronades —32-pounders in the *Constitution*, and 42-pounders in the *President* and the *United States*. The *Constellation*, *Congress*, and *Chesapeake* carried forty-eight guns, twenty-eight long 18's on the main-deck, and on the spar-deck two long 18's, and eighteen 32-pr. carronades. The ship-sloops carried 32-pr. carronades, and long 12's for bow-chasers. The brig-sloops carried 24 or 18-pr. carronades, according to their size.

The British vessels with which the American ships most frequently came in contact were the 38-gun frigates and the 18-gun brig-sloops. The 38-gun frigates were almost exactly similar in size and armament to the American ships of the same rate. The brig-sloops were somewhat less in size than the *Hornet*; they were supposed to carry eighteen guns, two bow-chasers and sixteen 32-pound carronades.

The system of rating, like the system of measuring tonnage, was thus purely artificial. The worst case of underrating in the American navy was that of the *Essex*, which rated thirty-two and carried forty-six guns, so that her real, was 44 per cent. in excess of her nominal force. Among the British ships with which the Americans came in contact, the worst case of underrating was the *Cyane*, which was rated at twenty-two and carried thirty-three guns, making a difference of 50 per cent. The *Wasp* carried eighteen guns, the *Hornet* twenty. The English brig-sloops almost always carried one light carronade beyond their rating, and sometimes, in addition, a light stern-chaser, or two bow-chasers, thrust into the bridle ports.

The conflicts which at the time and afterwards attracted most attention were the first three frigate fights, all of which took place between the American 44's and the British 38's. In each case the American ship was markedly superior in force. The countrymen of each combatant tried, on the one side, to enhance the glory of the victory by

minimising this difference in force, and, on the other, to explain away the defeat by exaggerating it. The Americans asserted, not merely in their histories, but even by resolutions in Congress, that the ships were practically equal in force, which a glance at the figures given above will show to be an absurd untruth. The British, on the other hand, sought consolation in declaring that the American frigates were "disguised line-of-battle ships." This has been solemnly repeated at intervals to the present day. It is of course pure nonsense. The American 44's were the finest frigates afloat; but there had already been 24-pounder frigates, not only in the British, but also in the French and Danish navies. One of the British frigates with which the Americans came in contact was the 40-gun frigate *Endymion*. The *Endymion*, like the *Constitution*, carried long 24's on her main-deck, and 32-pound carronades on her spar-deck. In 1815 she had fifty-one guns, including a shifting 24-pound carronade, making a broadside of 698 pounds. The *Constitution* that year carried fifty-two guns, and threw a broadside of 704 pounds. The difference in weight of metal was therefore just six pounds, or one per cent., which is certainly not enough to mark the difference between a 40-gun frigate and a "disguised line-of-battle ship." As a matter of fact, the difference between the force and the rating was greater in the case of the *Endymion* than in that of the *Constitution*.

The United States was not the first nation that invented the heavy frigate, but was the first to use it effectively. The French 24-pounder carried a ball about five pounds heavier than that of the American 24, and the 36-pound carronade which the French put on their spar-decks carried a heavier ball than the American or British 42-pounder; for the French pound was about 15 per cent. heavier than the English. Nevertheless the French, as well as the Dutch and Danish, heavy 24-pounder frigates had failed to distinguish themselves, and had been captured by the British just as easily as the 18-pounder frigates. In consequence, the belief was general that the 18-pounder frigates were really better as fighting machines than those with 24-pounders. The American successes upset this theory, because the Americans built heavy frigates which were even better than those built by the French and Dutch, and put into them officers and seamen who were able to handle and fight them as no frigates at that time were handled or fought by any other nation.

The size and seaworthy qualities, and the excellent armament of the American vessels did the utmost credit, both to those who had planned them, and to those who had built them. There was one point in which there was a falling off as compared with the British. The American foundries were not very good, and in consequence the guns were more liable to accidents; and almost all the shot were of light weight, the shortage varying from two

or three to as much as ten per cent. As a result, the real weight of the American broadside was always somewhat less than nominal.

The *personnel* of the American navy consisted of 500 officers, but twelve of whom were captains, and 5230 seamen and boys, of whom 2346 were destined for the cruising war vessels, the remainder being for service at the forts and navy yards, in the gunboats, and on the lakes. The officers were almost exclusively native Americans. In the crews, native Americans also overwhelmingly predominated; there were, however, a certain number of foreigners aboard almost every vessel, the proportion of English being probably larger than that of any other nationality, in spite of the fact that Great Britain was the country with which the Americans were at war. This proportion of foreigners, and especially of Englishmen, varied in the different ships. The captains, under instructions from the Secretary of the Navy, got rid of as many English as possible at the outbreak of the war, fearing lest they might be reluctant to fight against their countrymen. A good many remained, possibly as many as ten or even fifteen per cent. of the total in some of the ships, but certainly a smaller percentage on the average.

The British Navy was so large as to put all comparison between it and that of the United States out of the question. But the British Navy could not be diverted from the use to which it had so long been put. It was a knife at the throat of Napoleon, and

it could not be taken away. However, this applied only to the great fleets, and there was no need of great fleets for use against America. A few two-deckers, and a score or two of frigates would, it was believed, suffice to keep in check the entire American navy, and to blockade all the important American ports.

The British Navy stood at the height of its splendour and triumph, and higher than any other navy either before or since. During twenty years of almost uninterrupted warfare it had cowed or destroyed the navies of all other European powers. In fleet action after fleet action it had crushed to atoms the sea might of France, of Spain, of Holland, and of Denmark; in hundreds of single ship fights, in which the forces engaged on each side were fairly equal, the monotonous record of Britain's triumphs had been broken by less than half-a-dozen defeats. The British officers felt absolute confidence in their prowess, and they despised their new foes. As a whole they had begun to pay less attention to gunnery since Nelson's death; and this lack of care and their overwhelming pride and self-confidence — good qualities, but bad if carried to excess — made them less fit than formerly to contend on equal terms for the mastery of the ocean with enemies more skilful than any they had yet encountered. Their European antagonists had been completely cowed, and always entered into a fight half beaten in advance; but in the Americans they had to meet men of a different mettle.

THE EARLY AMERICAN VICTORIES

THE *President* and the *Belvidera* — The *Essex* and the *Alert* — The *Constitution* and the *Guerrière* — The *Wasp* and the *Frolic* — The *United States* and the *Macedonian* — The *Constitution* and the *Java* — The *Hornet* and the *Peacock* — American privateers — Effects of commerce-destroying — British discouragement — Admiralty precautions — Jurien de La Gravière on the war.

IN June, 1812, there were half-a-dozen British frigates, and one old two-decker, the *Africa*, 64,[1] immediately off the American coast. Had the American ships been ready they could doubtless have overcome these, even when collected into a squadron, as they were as soon as the news of the outbreak of the war became known. Such a victory over a squadron would have been an incalculable benefit to the Americans; but the administration had no thought of such action. It wished to lay up the American frigates in port, and was only prevented from doing so by the urgent remonstrances of two of the naval captains. The Secretary of the Navy wrote letters to Captain Isaac Hull urging him to act, even against a single foe, with timid caution; but Hull, fortunately, was willing to bear

[1] The *Africa*, built in 1781, was, in 1812, flagship of Vice-Admiral Herbert Sawyer (2), who, since 1810, had been Commander-in-Chief on the Halifax station. — W. L. C.

the responsibility which his superior shirked.[1] However, even a bold administration could have done little at the moment. The ships were not ready, and all that could be done was to send Captain John Rodgers on a cruise with his own frigate, the *President*, 44, the *United States*, 44, Captain Stephen Decatur, the *Congress*, 38, Captain John Smith, the *Hornet*, 18, Captain James Lawrence, and the *Argus*, 16, Captain Arthur Sinclair. Rodgers put to sea on June 21st, hoping to strike the West Indies' homeward-bound fleet.[2] Two days out of the port he encountered the British frigate *Belvidera*, 36, Captain Richard Byron (2).[3] Byron had been informed of the likelihood of war by a New York pilot boat; and as soon as he made out the strange ships he stood away before the wind. The Americans made all sail in chase, the *President*, a very fast ship off the wind, leading, and the *Congress* coming next.

At noon the *President* was within less than three miles of the *Belvidera*, steering N.E. by E. As the *President* kept gaining, Byron cleared for action, and shifted to the stern ports two long 18's on the main-deck and two 32-pound carronades on the quarter-deck. At 4.30[4] Commodore Rodgers himself fired the *President's* starboard forecastle bow-

[1] Ingersoll's 'Second War between the United States and Great Britain,' i. 377, 381.

[2] Captain John Rodgers to the Secretary of the Navy, Sept. 1st, 1812.

[3] Brenton, v. 46.

[4] Cooper, ii. 151.

chaser; the corresponding main-deck gun was next discharged; and then Rodgers fired his gun again. All three shots struck the stern of the *Belvidera*, killing and wounding nine men; but when the *President's* main-deck gun was discharged for the second time it burst, blowing up the forecastle deck and killing and wounding sixteen men, among them the Commodore himself, whose leg was broken. Nothing causes more panic than such an explosion, for every gun is at once distrusted; and in the midst of the confusion Byron opened his stern-chaser, and killed or wounded six men more. Had the *President* pushed steadily on, using only her bow-chasers until she closed, she would probably have run abreast of the *Belvidera*, which could not then have successfully withstood her; but, instead of doing this, she bore up and fired her port broadside, doing little damage; and this manœuvre she repeated again and again; while the *Belvidera* kept up a brisk and galling fire with her stern-chasers, and her active seamen repaired the damage done by the *President's* guns as fast as it occurred.[1] Byron cut away his anchors, the barge, yawl, gig, and jolly-boat, and started fourteen tons of water, gradually shifting his course, and beginning to draw ahead, and the *President*, which had lost much ground by yawing to deliver her broadsides, could not regain it.[2] The upshot of it was that Captain Byron

[1] James, vi. 119.

[2] Sir Howard Douglas, 'Naval Gunnery,' 419 (3rd edition).

escaped and got safely into Halifax on June 27th, having shown himself to be a skilful seaman and resolute commander.[1] Subsequently, when engaged in the blockade of the Chesapeake, he proved himself to be as humane and generous to non-combatants as he was formidable to armed foes.

Rodgers's squadron continued its cruise, but returned home two months later without accomplishing anything save the capture of a few merchantmen. When Byron brought the news of the war to Halifax, a squadron of ships[2] was immediately despatched to cruise against the United States, under the command of Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke, of the *Shannon*. Meanwhile the *Essex*, 32, had to put to sea under Captain David Porter, after he had in vain implored the Navy Department to allow him to change her maindeck carronades for long guns. She cut out a transport with a couple of hundred soldiers from a convoy of troopships bound to Quebec, under the protection of the British frigate *Minerva*, 32, Captain Richard Hawkins; and she captured the British ship-sloop *Alert*, 16,[3] Com-

[1] In this affair, Lieutenants John Sykes (2), William Henry Bruce (2), who was wounded, and the Hon. George Pryse Campbell, and the Master, Mr. James Kerr, of the *Belvidera*, specially distinguished themselves. (Byron's Disp.) — W. L. C.

[2] *Africa*, 64, *Shannon*, 38, *Belvidera*, 36, and *Æolus*, 32, subsequently reinforced by the *Guerrière*, 38. The squadron left Halifax on July 5th. — W. L. C.

[3] The *Alert* was one of twelve colliers which had been purchased into the Navy in 1804, and fitted with 18-pr. carronades. In 1812 two only of these craft, the *Alert* and the *Avenger*, remained on the

mander Thomas Lamb Polden Laugharne, after an exchange of broadsides, made prize of eight merchantmen, and then returned to New York.[1]

On July 12th another ship, destined to become one of the most famous in the American navy, put out of the Chesapeake. This was the 44-gun frigate *Constitution*, affectionately known as "Old Ironsides." She was commanded by Captain Isaac Hull, than whom there was no better single ship commander in the service. Her crew was almost entirely new, drafts of men coming on board up to the last moment; but they were of excellent stuff, being almost all native Americans, cool, handy, intelligent, and eager to learn their duties. Under the care of the experienced officers and under-officers they were got into shape as men-of-war's men without the slightest trouble. Just before starting, Hull wrote to the Secretary of the Navy: "The crew are as yet unacquainted with a ship of war, as many have but lately joined, and have never been on an armed ship before. . . . We are doing all we can to make them acquainted with their duties, and in a few days we shall have nothing to fear from any single-decked ship." [2]

list. In the brief action the *Alert* had three men wounded. Laugharne, his Master, and his Purser were most honourably acquitted for the loss of the ship; but the first lieutenant, Andrew Duncan, was dismissed the service for misbehaviour. — W. L. C.

[1] Navy Department MSS., 'Captains' Letters,' 1812, vol. ii., No. 128, etc.

[2] Navy Department MSS., 'Captains' Letters,' 1812, ii. No. 85.

There was need of hurry. On the afternoon of July 16th, when some leagues off Barnegat, Hull sighted Captain Broke's squadron, which had just previously captured the American brig *Nautilus*, 14. This squadron then consisted of the *Shannon*, 38, Captain Broke, the *Belvidera*, 36, Captain Richard Byron, the *Guerrière*, 38, Captain James Richard Dacres (2), the *Africa*, 64, Captain John Bastard, and the *Æolus*, 32, Captain Lord James Nugent Boyle Bernards Townshend. The *Guerrière* became separated from the rest of the squadron, and the *Constitution* beat to action and stood toward her, the wind being very light. The *Guerrière* also stood toward the *Constitution*, but, early on the 17th, when only half a mile away, she discovered the rest of the British squadron on her lee beam. She signalled to these vessels, and they did not answer — a circumstance which afterwards caused a sharp controversy among the Captains; whereupon, concluding that they were Commodore Rodgers's squadron, she tacked and stood away from the *Constitution* some time before discovering her mistake. It was now nearly daylight.

As morning broke all the British ships were in chase of the *Constitution*, heading eastward. At 5.30 it fell entirely calm, and Hull rigged four long 24's aft to serve as stern-chasers. At 6 A.M. the *Shannon*, the nearest frigate, tried a few shots, which fell short. Then most of the boats of the squadron were got out to tow her, and she began to gain on

the American. Hull tried kedging. All the spare rope was bent on to the cables and paid out into the cutters, and a kedge was run out half a mile ahead and let go; whereupon the crew clapped on and walked away with the ship, overrunning and tripping the kedge as she came up with the end of the line.[1] Meanwhile fresh lines and another kedge were carried ahead, and the frigate glided away from her pursuers. From time to time there were little puffs of air, and every possible advantage was taken of each. At one time the *Guerrière* opened fire, but her shot fell short. Later in the day the *Belvidera*, observing the benefit which the *Constitution* had derived from warping, did the same, and, having men from the other frigates to help her, she got near enough to exchange bow and stern-chasers;[2] but fear of the American guns rendered it impossible for either the *Belvidera* or the *Shannon* to tow very near.

The *Constitution's* crew showed most excellent spirit, the officers and men relieving one another regularly, and snatching their sleep on the decks. All through the afternoon and until late in the evening the towing and kedging went on, the British ships being barely out of gunshot. Then a light breeze sprang up, and, the sails of the *Constitution* being handled with consummate skill, she gradually drew away, and throughout the following

[1] Cooper is the best authority for this chase.

[2] Marshall's 'Naval Biography,' ii. 626.

day continued to gain. In the evening there came on a heavy rain squall, of which Hull took such skilful advantage that he greatly increased his lead. At 8.15 on the morning of the 20th, the British ships gave up the pursuit. During the three days' chase Hull had shown skill and seamanship as great as would be demanded by a successful battle, and his men had proved their hardihood, discipline, and readiness for work. If they could do as well with the guns as with the sails, Hull's confidence in his ability to meet any single-decker was more than justifiable; and Hull was eager to try the experiment. He did not have long to wait.

The *Constitution* put into Boston, and on August 6th made sail to the eastward. Hull acted without orders from the Department, for the administration was as yet uncertain as to whether it could afford to risk its frigates in action. But Hull himself wished for nothing so much as a chance to take the risk, and he knew that, not being one of the senior officers, he would speedily be superseded in the command of the *Constitution*. Accordingly, he sailed, right in the track of the British cruisers, to the coast of Nova Scotia, where the British fleet had its headquarters. In the afternoon of the 19th, in latitude 40° 30′ N. and 55° W., he made out a frigate bearing E. S. E. and to leeward.[1] She proved to be his old acquaintance, the *Guerrière*, under

[1] Letter of Captain Isaac Hull, August 28th and 30th, 1812.

Captain James Richard Dacres (2).[1] It was a cloudy day, and the wind blew fresh from the N. W. The *Guerrière* backed her maintopsail, and waited for the *Constitution*, which shortened her sail to fighting rig, and ran down with the wind nearly aft. The *Guerrière* was on the starboard tack, and at 5 o'clock she opened with her weather guns, the shot falling short. She then wore round and fired her port broadside, the shot this time passing over the *Constitution*.[2] As she again wore to fire her starboard battery, the *Constitution* yawed a little and fired two or three of her port bow-guns. Three or four times the *Guerrière* repeated this manœuvre, wearing and firing alternate broadsides with little or no effect; while the *Constitution* yawed to avoid being raked, and occasionally fired one of her bow-guns. The distance was very great, however, and little or no damage was caused. At 6 o'clock the *Guerrière* bore up and ran off with the wind almost astern on her port quarter under her topsails and jib. The *Constitution* set her main-topgallantsail and foresail, and at 6.5 P.M. closed within half pistol-shot distance on her adversary's port beam.[3] Then for the first time the action began in earnest, each ship firing as the guns bore. By 6.20[4] the two were fairly abreast, and the *Constitution* shot away the *Guerrière's* mizenmast, which fell over the starboard

[1] Letter of Captain Dacres, September 7th, 1812.

[2] Navy Department MSS., 'Logbook of *Constitution*,' vol. ii.

[3] 'Autobiography of Commodore Morris,' p. 164.

[4] 6.5 P. M. by the *Guerrière's* time. — W. L. C.

quarter, knocking a big hole in the counter, and brought the ship round against her helm. The British ship was being cut to pieces, while the American had hardly suffered at all. The *Constitution*, finding that she was ranging ahead, put her helm aport and luffed short round her enemy's bows, raking her with the starboard guns; then she wore, and again raked with her port battery. The Englishman's bowsprit got foul of the American's mizen-rigging, and the vessels then lay with the *Guerrière's* starboard bow against the *Constitution's* port quarter.[1] The Englishmen's bow-guns played havoc with Captain Hull's cabin, setting fire to it; and on both sides the boarders were called away. The British ran forward, but Captain Dacres relinquished the idea of attacking when he saw the crowds of men on the American's decks;[2] while the *Constitution's* people, though they gathered aft to board, were prevented by the heavy sea which was running. Both sides suffered heavily from the closeness of the musketry fire; indeed, it was at this time that almost the entire loss of the *Constitution* occurred. In the *Constitution*, as Lieutenant William S. Bush of the marines sprang upon the taffrail to leap on the *Guerrière's* deck, a British marine shot him dead; Charles Morris, the first lieutenant, and John C. Alwyn, the master, had also both leaped on the taffrail, and both were at the

[1] Cooper in 'Putnam's Magazine,' i. 475.

[2] Dacres's address to the court-martial at Halifax.

same moment wounded by the musketry fire. In the *Guerrière* almost all the men on the forecastle were picked off. Captain Dacres himself was shot and wounded by one of the American mizentop men while he was standing on the starboard forecastle hammocks cheering on his crew; the first and second lieutenants, Bartholomew Kent and Henry Ready, and the master, Robert Scott, were also shot down. The ships gradually worked round until they got clear. Immediately afterwards the *Guerrière's* foremast and mainmast went by the board, leaving her a defenceless hulk, rolling her main-deck guns into the water. At 6.30 the *Constitution* ran off for a little distance, and lay to until she had repaired the damages to her rigging. Captain Hull then stood under his adversary's lee, and the latter struck at 7 P.M., just two hours after she had fired the first shot; the actual fighting, however, occupied but little over twenty-five minutes.

The *Constitution* was a very much heavier ship than the *Guerrière*. She carried thirty-two long 24's and twenty-two 32-pr. carronades, while the *Guerrière* carried thirty long 18's, two long 12's, and eighteen 32-pr. carronades; the *Constitution's* crew numbered 456 all told, while the *Guerrière's* numbered but 282, and 10 of these were Americans, who refused to fight against their countrymen, and whom Captain Dacres, very greatly to his credit, permitted to go below. Fourteen of the *Constitution's* men

and 79 of the *Guerrière's* were killed or wounded.[1] The damage done to the *Constitution* was trifling, while the *Guerrière* was so knocked to pieces that she had to be abandoned and burned by the victors, who then set sail for Boston, which they reached on August 30th. "Captain Hull and his officers," wrote Captain Dacres, "have treated us like brave and generous enemies; the greatest care has been taken that we should not lose the smallest trifle."

Rarely has any single-ship action caused such joy to the victors, such woe to the vanquished. The disparity of force between the combatants was very nearly in the proportion of three to two. Against such odds, when there was an approximate equality in courage and skill, neither Dacres[2] nor any other captain in the British Navy could hope to succeed. But hitherto the British had refused to admit that there was or could be any equality of courage and skill between them and their foes. Moreover, the disparity in loss was altogether disproportionate to the disparity in force. No one could question the gallantry with which the British ship was fought; but in gunnery she showed at a great disadvantage

[1] The *Guerrière* lost 15 killed, including Lieutenant Henry Ready, and 63 (6 mortally) wounded, including Captain Dacres, Lieutenant Bartholomew Kent, Master Robert Scott, Master's Mates Samuel Grant and William John Snow, and Midshipman James Enslie. — W. L. C.

[2] Captain Dacres was tried at Halifax on Oct. 2nd, and, with his officers and crew, unanimously and honourably acquitted. — W. L. C.

compared to the American, and she was not handled with as much judgment. Like all the other British captains on the American coast, Dacres had been intensely eager to meet one of the large American frigates, and no doubt of his success had crossed his mind. British captains, in single-ship contests, had not been accustomed to weigh too nicely the odds against them ; and in the twenty years during which they had overcome the navies of every maritime power in Europe they had repeatedly conquered in single fight where the difference in force against them had been far heavier than in this instance. This was the case when, in 1799, the British 38-gun 18-pr. frigate *Sibyl* captured the French 44-gun 24-pr. frigate *Forte;* when, in 1805, the *Phœnix*, 36, captured the *Didon*, 40 ; when, in 1808, the *San Fiorenzo*, 36, captured the *Piedmontaise*, 40; and in many other instances. The exultation of the Americans was as natural as was the depression of the British ; though both feelings were exaggerated.

Captain Hull owed his victory as much to superiority of force as to superiority of skill ; but in the next sea fight that occurred the decisive difference was in skill. On October 18th the American 18-gun ship-sloop *Wasp*, Captain Jacob Jones, mounting sixteen 32-pr. carronades and two long 12's, with 137 men all told, sailed from the Delaware. She went south-eastward to get into the track of the West India vessels ; and on the 16th ran into a heavy gale in which she lost her jib-boom, and two

men who were on it. On the 17th the weather had moderated somewhat, and late in the evening she descried several sails in latitude 37° N. and longitude 65° W.[1] These were a convoy of merchantmen guarded by the British 18-gun brig-sloop *Frolic*, carrying sixteen 32-pr. carronades, two long 6's and two 12-pr. carronades, with a crew of 110 men. She was under the command of Commander Thomas Whinyates, and had also suffered in the gale of the 16th, in which her mainyard had been carried away.[2] The morning of the 18th was almost cloudless, and the *Wasp* bore down on the convoy under short fighting canvas; while the *Frolic* hauled to the wind under her boom-mainsail and close-reefed foretopsail, the merchantmen making all sail to leeward. At 11.30 A.M. the action began, the two ships running parallel on the starboard tack within sixty yards of one another, the *Wasp* firing her port and the *Frolic* her starboard guns. By degrees the ships fell off until they were almost before the wind. There was a heavy sea running, which caused the vessels to pitch and roll; and the two crews cheered loudly as the ships wallowed through the water. Clouds of spray dashed over both crews, and at times the muzzles of the guns were rolled under;[3] but in spite of the rough weather the batteries were well served. The *Frolic* fired far more rapidly than

[1] Letter of Captain Jones, Nov. 24th, 1812. The American letters can generally be found in 'Niles's Register.'

[2] Captain Whinyates' letter, Oct. 18th, 1812.

[3] 'Niles's Register,' iii. 324.

the *Wasp*, delivering three broadsides to her opponent's two, and shooting while on the crests of the seas. The shot, in consequence, tended to go high. In the *Wasp* the captains of the guns aimed with skill and precision, as the engaged side of their ship was getting down. They therefore fired into their opponent's hull; so that, though they fired fewer shots, a much larger proportion hit. Four minutes after the action began, the *Wasp's* maintopmast was shot away and fell with its yard across the port foretopsail braces, rendering the head-yards unmanageable. Ten minutes later the gaff and mizen-topgallantmast came down; and twenty minutes after the action had begun, every brace and most of the rigging was shot away, so that it was almost impossible to brace any of the yards. But while the *Wasp* suffered thus aloft, the *Frolic* was suffering far more heavily below. Her gaff and her head braces were shot away, and her lower masts wounded; but her hull was cut to pieces. The slaughter was very great among her crew; nevertheless, the survivors fought on with splendid courage. Gradually the *Wasp* forged ahead, while the two vessels drew closer together, so that at last the Americans struck the *Frolic's* side with their rammers in loading. The *Frolic* then fell aboard her antagonist, her jibboom coming in between the main and mizen-rigging of the *Wasp*, and passing over the heads of Captain Jones and Lieutenant James Biddle as they stood near the capstan. The

brig was raked from stem to stern; and in another moment the Americans began to swarm along the *Frolic's* bowsprit, though the roughness of the sea rendered the boarding very difficult. A New Jersey sailor, Jack Lang, was the first man on the bowsprit. Lieutenant Biddle then leaped on the hammock cloth to board; but one of the midshipmen who was following him seized his coat-tails and tumbled him back on deck. At the next swell he succeeded in getting on the bowsprit behind Jack Lang and another seaman, and he passed them both on the forecastle; but there was no one to oppose him. Not twenty of the British were left unhurt, and most of those were below. The man at the wheel was still at his post, doggedly attending to his duty, and two or three more were on deck, including Captain Whinyates and Lieutenant Frederick Boughton Wintle, both so severely wounded that they could not stand without support. It was impossible to resist longer, and Lieutenant Biddle lowered the flag at 12.15, after three-quarters of an hour's fighting.

A minute or two afterwards the *Frolic's* masts went by the board. Every one of her officers was wounded, two of them mortally.[1] The *Wasp* lost but ten men, chiefly aloft. Nevertheless, the des-

[1] The *Frolic* went into action with 110 men and boys all told on board. Of these, 15 were killed and 47 wounded, besides some who were slightly hurt. Among the wounded were Commander Whinyates, Lieutenants Charles M'Kay (mortally), and Frederick Boughton Wintle, and Master John Stephens (mortally). — W. L. C.

perate defence of the *Frolic* in the end accomplished the undoing of her foe, for in a few hours a British 74, the *Poictiers*, Captain John Poo Beresford, hove in sight, and captured both victor and vanquished, the *Wasp* being too much cut up aloft to make her escape.

The two ships were of practically equal force : in broadside the British used ten guns to the American's nine, and threw a few pounds more weight of metal, while they had twenty-five fewer men. The disparity in loss was enormous. The *Frolic* was desperately defended ; no men in any navy ever showed more courage than Captain Whinyates and his crew. The battle was decided by gunnery, the coolness and skill of the Americans, and the great superiority in the judgment and accuracy with which they fired, giving them the victory. Their skill was rendered all the more evident by the extreme roughness of the sea, which might have been expected to prevent, and, in the case of the *Frolic*, actually did prevent, very great accuracy of aim. In forty-five minutes the American ship cut her antagonist to pieces, conquering a foe who refused to admit defeat until literally unable to return a blow.

On October 8th Commander Rodgers left Boston, on his second cruise, with the *President*, *United States*, *Congress*, and *Argus*. Three days out they separated. The *President* and *Congress* cruised together, nearly crossing the Atlantic, but did nothing more than capture a dozen merchantmen, though

they twice chased British frigates — once the *Nymphe*, 38,[1] once the *Galatea*, 36.[2] They returned to Boston on December 31st. The *Argus* got in about the same time, having herself been chased for three days by a British frigate.[3] She had to start her water and cut away her boats and anchors to escape; but she kept her guns, and during the chase actually succeeded in taking and manning a prize, though the delay allowed the pursuer to get near enough to open fire as the vessels separated.

The fourth ship of Rodgers's squadron met with greater luck. This was the frigate *United States*, 44, Captain Stephen Decatur. She was a sister ship to the *Constitution*, but mounted 42-pr. carronades instead of 32's, and had a crew of 478 officers and men all told. On October 25th, in latitude 29° N. and longitude 29° 30′ W., she descried a sail on her weather-beam, twelve miles distant.[4] This was the British 38-gun frigate *Macedonian*, Captain John Surmam Carden. Unlike the *Guerrière*, which had been captured from the French, she was a new oak-built ship, rather larger than any of the American 18-pr. frigates. She carried a crew of 301 men all told. Her armament was like the *Guerrière's*, except that she had two long 18's fewer on the main-

[1] Captain Farmery Predam Epworth. The *Nymphe* was sighted and chased on October 10th. — W. L. C.

[2] Captain Woodley Losack. The *Galatea* was sighted on October 31st. — W. L. C.

[3] Letter of Captain Arthur Sinclair, Jan. 4th, 1813.

[4] Letter of Captain Decatur, Oct. 30th, 1812.

deck, and two long 9's extra on the spar-deck. Like the *Guerrière*, she had an 18-pr. carronade extra, so that she presented twenty-five guns in broadside, throwing 547 pounds of shot; while the *United States* had twenty-seven guns in broadside, throwing nominally 846 pounds of shot, although owing to the short weight of metal the actual broadside was probably under 800.

The *Macedonian* was reputed to be a crack ship. Captain Carden had exercised every care to gather a crew of picked, first-rate men. He had also taken every opportunity to get rid of all the shiftless and slovenly seamen. Both he himself and his first lieutenant, David Hope, were merciless disciplinarians, and kept the crew in order by the unsparing use of the lash, in which they seemed positively to delight. They were feared even more than they were hated, and the discipline of the ship was seemingly perfect; but they made the men under them detest the service.[1]

Lieutenant Hope said afterwards that the state of discipline on board was excellent; and that in no British ship was more attention paid to gunnery.[2]

[1] 'Thirty Years from Home, or a Voice from the Main-deck, being the Experience of Samuel Leech,' fifteenth edition, 1847, pp. 89, 99, etc. Leech was an Englishman who was a sailor in the *Macedonian;* he afterwards entered the United States service, with others of the *Macedonian's* crew. He belonged to the British Nonconformist type, which has so many points in common with the average American citizen. His rambling reminiscences are by no means without value.

[2] Marshall's 'Navy Biography,' ii. 1018.

The results of the action showed, however, that the discipline was that of a martinet, and that in intelligence and judgment the gunners of the *Macedonian* could not compare with those in the *United States*, where the sailors were admirably drilled, and yet were treated so humanely that the captured crew speedily wished to enlist among them.

Captain Carden knew nothing of the defeat of the *Guerrière*, and was most anxious to engage the *United States*. Once, while at Norfolk before the war, he and Decatur had met and joked one another as to which ship would win if they met in battle. The *Macedonian's* people were entirely confident of victory, although among the crew there was a generally expressed wish that the antagonist were a French, instead of an American, frigate, because they knew that they could whip the French, and they had learned from the Americans on board that the Yankee frigates carried heavy metal.

Of these American seamen there was a considerable number among the crew of the *Macedonian*. A British seaman, who served long on the *Macedonian*, in writing out his reminiscences in after-life, gave a vivid picture of how they happened to be on board. In one place he described the work of the press-gang at a certain port, adding "among (the impressed men) were a few Americans; they were taken without respect to their protections, which were often taken from them and destroyed; some were released through the influence of the American Consul;

others, less fortunate, were carried to sea, to their no small chagrin." When the ship was at Norfolk, as already mentioned, the sailors were denied all liberty to get on shore lest they should desert. "Many of our crew were Americans; some of these were pressed men; others were much dissatisfied with the severity, not to say cruelty, of our discipline; so that a multitude of the crew were ready to give leg-bail, as they termed it, could they have planted their feet on American soil." [1] Before going into action some of these Americans requested permission not to fight against their countrymen; but Captain Carden, unlike Captain Dacres, refused to grant this permission, and ordered them to the guns under penalty of death. One or two of them were killed in the action. The crew of the *United States* was mainly composed of native Americans, but among the foreigners on board there were a number of Englishmen, as well as many Americans, who had served in the British fleet.[2] All did their duty equally well.

[1] Leech, pp. 80, 102.

[2] "That Britons were opposed to Britons in the *Macedonian* action is no less true than lamentable. Most of her gallant defenders recognised old shipmates in the British Navy among those who had fought under the American flag. We have already stated that a quartermaster discovered his first cousin in the person of a traitor. Two other seamen met with brothers from whom they had been long separated; and Mr. James, in his 'Naval History,' informs us that an officer's servant, a young lad from London, named William Hearne, found his own brother among the *United States*' crew. . . . It is also worthy of remark that many of the guns on board the

As soon as it was evident what the *United States* was, the *Macedonian* beat to quarters, the bulkheads were knocked away, the guns were cast loose, and in a few minutes all was ready. In the excitement of the battle the men forgot their wrongs, real and fancied, and went into action in good spirits; and throughout the fight they continued to cheer heartily. The junior midshipmen were stationed below on the berth-deck with orders to shoot any man who ran from his quarters; and the captain exhorted the men to show fidelity and courage, quoting Nelson's famous words, "England expects every man to do his duty." [1]

The *Macedonian* then bore down toward the *United States*, which stood toward her with the wind a little forward of the portbeam. Captain Carden, from over-anxiety to keep the weather-gage,[2] hauled by the wind, and passed far to windward of the American. Decatur eased off and fired

United States were named after British ships, and some of our most celebrated naval commanders. Captain Carden, observing 'Victory' painted on the ship's side over one port, and 'Nelson' over another, asked Commodore Decatur the reason of so strange an anomaly. He answered: 'The men belonging to those guns served many years with Lord Nelson, and in the *Victory*. The crew of the gun named 'Nelson' were once bargemen to that great chief. . . .'" — Marshall: 'Nav. Biog.' ii. 1019. But it does not necessarily follow that men who had served with Nelson were British subjects; and it is admitted on both sides that before 1812 very many Americans had served with honour in the British Navy. — W. L. C.

[1] Leech, 127, etc.

[2] Sentence of court-martial held on board the *San Domingo*, 74, at Bermuda, May 27th, 1813.

a broadside, which fell short; he then held his luff, and, the next time he fired, his long main-deck guns, the only ones used, told heavily. The Englishman responded with his long 18's, but soon found that at long bowls the American had the advantage, not only in weight of metal, but also in rapidity of fire, for the broadsides of the *United States* were delivered almost twice as fast as those of the *Macedonian*.[1] Captain Carden soon altered his mind and tried to close; but he had lost his chance by keeping his wind in the first place, and, when he bore up and down with the wind on his port-quarter, he exposed himself to heavy punishment. The *United States* at 10.15 A.M. led her maintopsail aback and used her whole port broadside. The British ship replied with her starboard guns, hauling up to do so, while the American alternately eased off and came to, keeping up a terrific fire. The guns of the *Macedonian* caused some damage to the American's rigging, but hardly touched her hull, while Carden's ship suffered heavily both below and aloft, and her decks began to look like slaughter-pens. The British sailors fought like tigers — some stripped to the shirt, others to the naked skin. Those who were killed outright were immediately thrown overboard. One man, who was literally cut almost in two by a shot, was caught as he fell by two or three of his shipmates, and, before the last flicker of life had left him, was tossed into the sea.

[1] James, vi. 169.

Lieutenant Hope showed that, though a cruel task-master, he at least possessed undaunted courage. He was wounded, but as soon as the wound was dressed returned to the deck, shouting to the men to fight on; and he alone advised against striking the flag, preferring to see the ship sink beneath him.[1] The *Macedonian* gradually dropped to leeward, while the American forereached until the firing ceased. Finding herself ahead and to windward, the *United States* tacked and ranged up under the *Macedonian's* lee, at 11.15, when the latter struck her colours, an hour after the action began.

The *United States* had suffered very little. Some of her spars were wounded, and the rigging was a good deal cut up; but her hull had not been touched more than two or three times. As the ships were never close enough to be within fair range of grape and musketry, only a dozen of her men were killed and wounded. The *Macedonian*, on the other hand, had received over a hundred shots in her hull; her mizenmast and her fore and main-topmasts were shot away, and on the engaged side all her carronades but two, and two of her main-deck guns, were dismounted, while one hundred and four[2] of the crew were either killed or wounded.[3]

[1] Leech, 131.

[2] The killed numbered 38, including Boatswain James Holmes, Master's Mate Thomas James Nankivel, and Mr. Dennis Colwell, schoolmaster. Among the 68 wounded were Lieutenants David

[3] Captain Carden's Letter, Oct. 28th, 1812.

When the Americans came on board to take possession, the British crew, maddened by the sight of their dead comrades, heated with the fury of the battle, and excited by rum they had obtained from the spirit-room, evinced a tendency to fight their captors. But the latter showed so much good humour, and set to work with such briskness to take care of the wounded and put the ship to rights, that the two crews soon became the best of friends, and ate, drank, sang, laughed, and yarned together with hearty goodwill. A rather unexpected result was that the majority of the captive crew soon showed a disposition to enlist in the American navy, especially when they found out how much more kindly the seamen were treated in the American ships. The Americans, however, not only refused to enlist them, but also kept close guard over them to prevent their escape, as it was wished to send them to England in a cartel to exchange for American prisoners.[1] However, in one way or another, most of them managed to get away, a few only venturing to enlist in the American navy, as death would naturally be their portion if they were recaptured and recognised by the British.

Hope and John Bulford, Master's Mate Henry Roebuck, Midshipman George Greenway, and Mr. Francis Baker, first-class volunteer. Captain Carden and his officers and men, upon trial for the loss of the ship, were most honourably acquitted, the court specially commending Carden's gallantry, and the good conduct and discipline of all concerned. — W. L. C.

[1] Leech. He is the authority for most of the incidents of the action, as seen from the *Macedonian*.

Decatur discontinued his cruise to take back his prize to the United States. He reached New London in safety, and the *Macedonian* became part of the American navy.

In this fight the *Macedonian's* only superiority over the *United States* was speed. In force she was very much inferior, about in the proportion of three to two, so that only marked superiority in seamanship and gunnery could have given her the victory. As a matter of fact, however, the superiority was the other way. Decatur handled his ship faultlessly, and William Henry Allen, first lieutenant of the *United States*, had trained the men to the highest point of efficiency in the use of the guns. The gun practice of the *Macedonian's* crew was apparently poor, but this was probably as much the fault of the captain as of the gunners, for he first kept off too far, so as to give all possible advantage to the 24-pounders of the Americans, and then made his attack in such a manner as to allow his skilful adversaries to use their guns to the best advantage. The *Macedonian* was bravely fought, and was not surrendered until there was no hope of success left. Still, the defence was not so desperate as that of the *Essex*, nor indeed did the ship lose so heavily as the *Java* or *Chesapeake*. Captain Carden had bravely encountered heavy odds, for during the preceding twenty years the traditions of the British Navy had taught him that it was possible to win against such odds. This had been proved scores of times in

single fight at the expense of the French, the Spaniards, the Dutch, the Danes, and the Turks. But only a real superiority in skill could have warranted the effort. An eminent British officer, Sir Howard Douglas, sums up the action very justly, though he ascribes wholly to inferior gunnery what should be in part ascribed to lack of judgment on the side of the commanding officer. He says: —

"As a display of courage the character of the service was nobly upheld; but we would be deceiving ourselves were we to admit that the comparative expertness of the crews in gunnery was equally satisfactory. Now, taking the difference of effect as given by Captain Carden, we must draw this conclusion — that the comparative loss in killed and wounded (104 to 12), together with the dreadful account he gives of the condition of his own ship, while he admits that the enemy's vessel was in comparatively good order, must have arisen from inferiority in gunnery, as well as in force."

Elsewhere the same writer comments upon the dangers to which encounters with skilful opponents exposed captains who had been led by repeated triumphs over men of inferior discipline and ability to feel that defeat was out of question, and to "contemn all manœuvring as a sign of timidity." It was the old lesson of the ill effects of over-confidence, complicated by the effects of following under wrong conditions the course which a great man had followed under right ones. Timid manœuvring

was an error, especially in the presence of an unskilful or inferior foe; and it was to such manœuvring that Nelson alluded when — or if — he said, "Never mind manœuvring — go at them." Nelson knew very well when to manœuvre and when not to, and his own genius and the skill of his captains and seamen enabled him to defy heavy odds. But it was a very different thing for would-be imitators of Nelson's tactics who lacked his genius, and who had to encounter superiority in skill as well as superiority in physical force.

On October 26th,[1] the *Constitution*, Captain William Bainbridge, and the *Hornet*, Captain James Lawrence, sailed; and, after cruising to and fro, arrived off San Salvador on December 13th. There they found a British ship of twenty guns, the *Bonne Citoyenne*, Captain Pitt Burnaby Greene, almost exactly of the *Hornet's* force, and Lawrence challenged her captain to single fight, the *Constitution* giving the usual pledges not to interfere. The challenge was refused, for a variety of reasons; among others, because the *Bonne Citoyenne* was carrying home half a million pounds in specie. Leaving the *Hornet* to blockade her, Bainbridge ran off to the southward.

At 9 A.M. on December 29th, while the *Constitution* was running along the coast of Brazil about thirty miles off shore, in latitude 13° 6′ S. and longitude

[1] James says that the *Constitution* and *Hornet* left Boston on October 30th. — W. L. C.

32° W.,[1] she made out the British frigate *Java*, Captain Henry Lambert, inshore and to westward.[2] The *Java* at once bore down in chase, while the *Constitution* stood toward her on the starboard tack.[3] The *Java* was of the same strength as the *Guerrière*, except that she had a crew of about four hundred men,[4] and carried two long guns less, and two carronades more.[5] The *Constitution* had sent ashore two of her carronades, and had four hundred and seventy-five men in her crew.

The *Java* was much the swifter ship, for the weak point in all the American 44's was their lack of speed. In point of physical force the combatants stood more nearly on an equality than in either of

[1] James (vi. 126) gives the time of sighting as 2 P. M. (an obvious error), and the position as lat. 13° 6′ S., long. 30° W. — W. L. C.

[2] Letter of Captain Bainbridge, Jan. 3rd, 1813.

[3] Letter of Lieutenant Henry Ducie Chads, Dec. 31st, 1812.

[4] James explains that on August 17th, 1812, the *Java*, 38 (ex-*Renommée*), had been commissioned at Portsmouth to carry to Bombay the newly-appointed governor, Lieut.-General Hislop and a supply of stores; and says that her ship's company included about 60 raw Irish landsmen, and 50 disaffected seamen from the *Coquette*, 18, besides a considerable number of Marine Society boys — in all 397 persons of every description, mainly inexperienced. She had sailed from Spithead on November 12th, in charge of two Indiamen, and, on December 12th, had captured the American merchantman *William*, into which she had put a prize crew of 20, all told. The Indiamen had afterwards parted company, and the *Java* had put into San Salvador for water. — W. L. C.

[5] *See* Roosevelt's 'Naval War of 1812,' p. 126, for full discussion of the figures given above. The official accounts contradict one another flatly. The reason for the great number of men aboard the *Java* was because she was carrying part of the crews for three other British ships.

the other frigate duels, the odds being about five to four, or rather less — odds which were a heavy handicap to the *Java*, but which were not such as to render the contest by any means hopeless if the weaker party were even slightly superior in skill and fighting efficiency.

The *Constitution* stood away from the land towards the S.E., while the *Java* made sail on a parallel course to windward, and gained rapidly. At half-past one the *Constitution* shortened her canvas to fighting rig, and ran easily off on the port tack. The *Java* also shortened sail, and came down off the wind toward her adversary's weather quarter. The colours of the two ships floated from every mast in proud defiance, the decks were cleared to fighting trim, and the men stood ready at quarters. At 2 P.M. they opened fire at long range, the British with the lee and the Americans with the weather guns. The firing was very spirited, and at the beginning the ships suffered about equally, for the first broadside of the *Java* was well aimed, killing and wounding several of the *Constitution's* crew. The Englishman kept edging down until he got well within range of grape and musketry. Being swifter, he soon forereached, intending to wear across his antagonist's bow and rake him; but Bainbridge anticipated the movement, and himself wore in the smoke. The two antagonists again ran off side by side, with the wind on their starboard beams, the Englishman still a-weather, and steering freer

than the *Constitution*, which had luffed to close.[1] The action went on at pistol-shot distance; but in a few minutes the *Java* again forged ahead out of the weight of her adversary's fire and then kept off as before; and, as before, the *Constitution* avoided this by wearing, both ships once more coming round with their heads to the east, the American still to leeward. The *Java* kept the advantage of the wind, and still forereached a little; and she sought to rake the *Constitution* as the latter from time to time luffed in the endeavour to close; but after the first broadside or two her gunnery had fallen off. Most of the loss which she inflicted was inflicted early in the action.

Bainbridge, finding that his foe outsailed him, and that he was therefore constantly in danger of being raked, set the *Constitution's* foresail and mainsail, and came up close on the *Java's* lee beam. The weight of his fire then told heavily, and among other losses the *Java's* jib-boom and the end of her bowsprit were carried away. The *Constitution* in her turn forged ahead, and again wore in the smoke. The *Java* hove in stays, but the loss of her headsail made her fall off very slowly; and the American frigate, passing across her stern two cable-lengths away, raked her heavily. As the *Java* fell off she replied with her port guns, and the two vessels bore up and ran off with the wind nearly aft, the *Java* still to windward. She was suffering heavily, and

[1] Navy Departmental MSS., Log of *Constitution*.

the *Constitution* very little. The ships were well within musketry range, and the British lost many men by the fire from the American topmen, and still more from the round and grape; but the crew showed no signs of flinching, and fought on like tigers. Captain Lambert saw that he was beaten at the guns, and that he was being cut to pieces both below and aloft; and he resolved to try boarding. The helm was put a-weather, and the *Java* came down for the *Constitution's* main-chains. The boarders and marines gathered in the gangways and on the forecastle, the boatswain having been ordered to cheer them with his pipe that they might make a clean spring.[1] But boarding was a hazardous experiment to try against an enemy not already well beaten at the guns. As the *Java* came down, the Americans raked her with terrible effect, taking out her foremast and maintopmast. The stump of the *Java's* bowsprit caught in the *Constitution's* mizen-rigging, and she was raked again, while the American marines and topmen, by their steady fire, prevented any effort to board.

Finally the ships got clear; and once again they ran off abreast. Again the *Constitution* forereached, and, wearing, luffed up under the *Java's* quarter, raked her with the starboard guns, and wore again, recommencing the action with her port battery. Once more the vessels were abreast, and the action

[1] Minutes of court-martial held on board H.M.S. *Gladiator*, Portsmouth, April 23rd, 1813.

went on as furiously as ever, the *Java* refusing to acknowledge defeat. The wreck of her tophamper lay over her starboard side, taking fire every few minutes; and at that time her able and gallant commander was mortally wounded by a ball fired by one of the American maintop men.[1] Lieutenant Henry Ducie Chads then took the command, though painfully wounded. The British sailors continued to fight with undaunted resolution, cheering lustily; but nothing could stand against the cool precision of the Yankee fire. The decks of the *Java* looked like a slaughter-house; one by one her masts fell; her guns were silenced; and she lay a sheer hulk on the water, when, at 4.5 P.M., the *Constitution*, thinking that her adversary had struck, ceased firing and passed out of action to windward. There she spent an hour in repairing damages and securing her masts; then, in practically as good condition as ever, she stood towards her foe, who struck his flag.

The American ship had suffered but little either in hull or aloft, and, after an hour of repairs, was again in good fighting trim. Thirty-four of her crew were killed or wounded,[2] for the *Java* had been more skilfully handled and more stubbornly fought than either the *Guerrière* or the *Macedonian*. The British ship was a riddled and dismasted hulk. "The *Java* sustained unequalled injuries beyond the

[1] Report of the Surgeon of the *Java*.

[2] Report of the Surgeon of the *Constitution*.

Constitution," ran the statement of one of her officers.[1] One hundred and twenty-four of those on board her were killed or wounded.[2] Captain Bainbridge reported that the *Java* was "exceedingly well handled and bravely fought," and paid a deserved tribute to the worth and bravery of Captain Lambert;[3] while Lieutenant Chads in his report stated that "our gallant enemy has treated us most generously," and Lieutenant-General Hislop presented Bainbridge with a handsome sword. Owing to the distance from home, the *Java* was destroyed, and the *Constitution* presently returned to the United States.

The fight was remarkable because of the rather complicated nature of the manœuvres, and the skill

[1] 'Naval Chronicle,' xxix. 432.

[2] The *Java* went into action with a crew of 377 all told, including supernumeraries, 20 others having been sent on board the *William*. Of these, 22 were killed, and 102 wounded. Among the killed were Master's Mates Charles Jones, Thomas Hammond, and William Gascoigne, Midshipmen William Salmond and Edward Keele, and Clerk (supernumerary) Thomas Joseph Matthias. Among the wounded were Captain Henry Lambert (who died on January 4th, 1813), Lieutenant Henry Ducie Chads, Master Batty Robinson, Second Lieutenant David Davies, R.M., Boatswain James Humble, and four Midshipmen, besides, among the supernumeraries, Commander John Marshall, Lieutenant James Saunders, Master's Mate William Brown, and General Hislop's aide-de-camp. Midshipman Keele, who was only thirteen years of age, was not killed outright, but died in a few hours. Mr. Humble lost a hand, and had a wound near the elbow, but, after having a tourniquet put on, returned to his duty. — W. L. C.

[3] Captain Henry Lambert had received his post commission on April 10th, 1805. — W. L. C.

with which they were performed. As regards the tactical ability with which the ships were handled, there was nothing to choose; and certainly no men could have fought more gallantly than the *Java's* crew; but there was a very great difference in the comparative efficiency of the two crews as fighting machines, especially in gunnery. The difference in the damage done was utterly out of proportion to the difference in force. Probably the material of the *Constitution's* crew was slightly better than that of the *Java*, for the seafaring folk from among whom it was recruited were peculiarly handy and resourceful, and they enlisted freely in the American ships, regarding the quarrel as peculiarly their own; while the British frigates were manned by pressed men from many different sources, who were full of fight, but who had little cause to love their task-masters. The main reason for the difference in fighting efficiency, however, was that one crew had been carefully trained, and the other had not. The *Java's* crew had been on board her six weeks, and, when the *Constitution* fought her first battle, the crew had been on board her only five weeks; but the *Constitution's* crew from the very beginning were incessantly practised in firing, both with blank cartridges and also at a target; whereas the *Java*, during the entire six weeks, had fired but six broadsides, all of blank cartridges, and her crew had been exercised only occasionally even in pointing the guns. Thus the Americans were trained to shoot with a precision

entirely foreign to their opponents. Moreover, they were better trained to play different parts, so that, for instance, the sudden loss of a gun captain did not demoralise the rest of the crew, who were able immediately to supply his place from among themselves. The petty officers, also, among the Americans were better paid than in the British ships, and were of a better class; and the American officers showed greater zeal and intelligence in getting their men into order, and in drilling them in the essentials, never losing sight of the fact that efficiency in fighting was the first consideration, to which all considerations of show came second.

The *Hornet* continued to blockade the *Bonne Citoyenne* until January 24th, 1813, the latter still refusing to fight and jeopardise the treasure she had on board. Then the *Montagu*, 74,[1] arrived, and the *Hornet*, under cover of the darkness, stood out to sea. She made a few prizes, one of much value. On February 24th, 1813, near the mouth of the Demerara River, Captain Lawrence, being near shore, discovered a man-of-war brig lying at anchor; and while beating round Caroband bank in order to get at her, he discovered another man-of-war brig edging down on his weather quarter.[2] Both were British. The one at anchor was the *Espiègle*, of sixteen 32-pr. carronades, and two 6-prs., Commander John

[1] Captain Manley Hall Dixon, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Manley Dixon commanding on the Brazilian station. — W. L. C.

[2] Letter of Captain Lawrence, March 20th, 1813.

Taylor (1); the other was the *Peacock*, Commander William Peake, which for some unknown reason had exchanged her 32-pr. carronades for 24's.[1] She had left the *Espiègle's* anchorage that morning at ten o'clock. The *Hornet* at once turned to attack the newcomer, being anxious to get rid of her before her companion inside the bar could come to her assistance.

At 4.20 P.M. the *Peacock* hoisted her colours, and the *Hornet* beat to quarters and cleared for action. Lawrence kept close hauled to get the weather-gage. When he was sure that he could weather the enemy, he tacked at 5.10 and stood toward her, hoisting his colours. The ship and the brig were now both on the wind — the *Hornet* on the starboard, and the *Peacock* on the port, tack. At 5.25 they exchanged broadsides as they passed one another, but a few yards distant, in opposite directions, the Americans firing their lee, and the British their weather guns, as they bore. The contrast in the gunnery of the two crews was almost absurd. As the British were using the weather battery, the guns, unless somewhat depressed, were sure to throw the shot high, and for this the crews made no allowance. Not a shot penetrated the *Hornet's* hull, the entire broadside passing through the rigging. One of her men in the mizen-top was killed by a round shot, and two in the main-top were wounded;[2] a few ropes were

[1] James, vi. 194 (ed. 1837).

[2] Navy Departmental MSS., Logbook of *Hornet*, *Wasp*, and *Argus*, 1809–1813.

cut, the foremast was wounded, and some holes were made in the sails; but her fighting efficiency was not impaired in the slightest degree. On the other hand, the *Hornet's* guns, being fired from the lee side of the ship, naturally shot low, and her men aimed as if at drill, almost every shot striking the *Peacock's* hull, while, inasmuch as the *Peacock* was heeled over, many of them struck below the water-line, making holes through which the water gushed in torrents as soon as the brig was again on an even keel.

When the two vessels were clear, Captain Peake put his helm hard up and wore, firing his starboard guns; but Lawrence had watched him closely, and himself bore up, and at 5.35 ran the Englishman close aboard on the starboard quarter. Another broadside, added to the musketry fire, did the business. Captain Peake fell; and at 5.39,[1] just fourteen minutes after the first shot, the *Peacock* surrendered. Immediately afterwards her mainmast went by the board, and she began to settle, hoisting her ensign union down as a signal of distress. Both vessels cast anchor; and Lieutenant Shubrick, being sent on board the prize, reported her sinking. Lieutenant Connor was then sent in another boat to try to save the brig; but though the captors threw the guns overboard, plugged the shot holes, and worked the pumps, the water gained so rapidly that the

[1] British accounts, and James, make the action to have lasted from 5.25 to 5.50 P. M. — W. L. C.

attempt was abandoned, and the *Hornet's* officers used what remained of the fading tropical twilight in removing the wounded and prisoners. Just as dark fell the brig suddenly sank, in water which was so shallow that her foretop remained above the surface. There was, of course, much confusion. Three of the *Hornet's* men and nine prisoners went down with the *Peacock*. Four other prisoners lowered the stern-boat and escaped unobserved to the land, while four more saved themselves by running up the rigging into the foretop. Lieutenant Connor and the rest of the *Hornet's* men who were on board, and the remainder of the *Peacock's* crew, who had not been shifted, escaped by jumping into the launch which was lying on the booms, and paddling her towards the ship with pieces of boards.

Seven of the *Hornet's* men and six of the *Peacock's* were on the sick list, leaving fit for action one hundred and thirty-five of the former,[1] and one hundred and twenty-two of the latter.[2] The *Hornet* carried twenty, and the *Peacock* nineteen[3] guns, each presenting ten in broadside; but, as already mentioned, the *Peacock's* carronades were 24's, and the *Hornet's* 32's. There was a very real disparity in force, but in this particular instance the disparity in force in

[1] Letter of Lieutenant Connor, April 26th, 1813.

[2] Letter of Lieutenant Frederick Augustus Wright, April 19th, 1813.

[3] According to James, the *Peacock* mounted only sixteen 24-pr. carronades, and two long 6-prs., and had nine, not ten, guns in broadside. — W. L. C.

no way affected the result. The *Peacock's* guns simply did not hit, so that their calibre was a matter of no possible consequence. The *Hornet* was hardly scratched, and lost but three men, all aloft; while the *Peacock* was sunk in fourteen minutes, nearly one-third of her crew being killed or wounded.[1] She was bravely fought, but her gunnery was phenomenally bad. It appears that she had long been known as "the yacht" on account of the tasteful arrangement of her deck. The breechings of the carronades were lined with white canvas, and nothing could exceed in brilliancy the polish upon the traversing bars and elevating screws.[2] Of course, a slovenly ship does not often make a good fight, for slovenliness is an indication of laziness, carelessness, and inefficiency; but man — and above all the fighting man — shall not live by neatness alone, nor yet merely by precision in the performance of duties not connected with the actual shock of arms. Commander Peake had committed the not uncommon mistake of confounding the incidents and the essentials of discipline.

Throughout the fight the *Espiègle* was but four miles distant,[3] and was plainly visible from the

[1] Of her crew of 122 men and boys, the *Peacock* had five killed, including Commander Peake, a Commander of January 21st, 1806, and 33 wounded, three mortally. — W. L. C.

[2] James, vi. 194 (ed. 1837).

[3] Upon this point there is, however, a conflict of evidence. Lieutenant Frederick Augustus Wright, of the *Peacock*, testified that the *Espiègle* "was not visible from the look-outs stationed at the *Pea-*

Hornet; but for some reason, which never was fully explained, her Commander did not observe anything, and knew nothing of the action until the next day. Lawrence, of course, took it for granted that he must know, and would shortly come out; and, by nine o'clock in the evening, new sails had been bent on, and the decks cleared, so that the *Hornet* was again ready for action. She was then, however, overcrowded with people and short of water, and, as the *Espiègle* showed no signs of coming out,[1] the *Hornet* stood for home, which she reached in March. On their arrival at New York the officers of the *Peacock* published a card expressing their appreciation of the way in which they and their men had been treated. The note ran in part, "We ceased to consider ourselves prisoners, and everything that friendship could dictate was adopted by you and the officers of the *Hornet* to remedy the inconvenience we would otherwise have experienced from the

cock's mastheads for some time previous to the commencement of the action." James, too, says (vi. 194, ed. 1837): "The wreck of the *Peacock* was visible for a long time after the action, and bore from Point Spirit, which is about six miles to the eastward of the entrance to Demerara river, N. E. by E.; making the distance between the *Espiègle* and *Peacock*, during the action, nearly 24 miles." — W. L. C.

[1] Commander John Taylor (1), of the *Espiègle*, was tried at Portsmouth, in 1814, on various charges, and was, in consequence, dismissed the service; but though the charges included a count of having failed in his duty when he was in pursuit of the *Hornet*, it was held that that particular charge was not proved. Commander Taylor was reinstated, as "the junior Commander," in 1817. (Marshall, iv., pt. iii. 537, and the Navy Lists.) — W. L. C.

unavoidable loss of the whole of our property and clothes owing to the sudden sinking of the *Peacock*." [1]

So far the American navy had achieved success beyond what any one could have either hoped for or dreaded, and the British government had paid dearly for its contemptuous disregard of the power of the United States at sea. It was utterly unprepared for the skill and energy shown by the Americans. More ships of the line and frigates were gradually assembled on the American coast; but, during the first eight months or thereabouts, no effective blockade was established, and the American cruisers slipped in and out as they wished. The British picked up a couple more American brigs, the *Viper* and the *Vixen*,[2] and captured many American merchantmen, but this was all.

The offensive powers of the Americans were displayed not merely in the use of their regular war-vessels, but in the careers of the privateers. The mere declaration of war with Great Britain meant the destruction for the moment of the major part of the foreign trade of America; and the more daring spirits who had formerly gone into this trade at once turned to the business of privateering. The

[1] This and the other letters are given in full in 'Niles's Register' for this and the following months.

[2] The *Viper*, 16, Lieut. J. D. Henby, was captured on January 17th, 1813, by the *Narcissus*, 32, Capt. John Richard Lumley. The *Vixen*, 12, Lieut. Geo. U. Read, had been taken on the previous November 22nd, by the *Southampton*, 32, Capt. Sir James Lucas Yeo. — W. L. C.

American privateers swarmed out into the Atlantic, and especially round the West India Islands, the trade with which was at that period very profitable to England. At times, in the past, the French privateers had inflicted very great damage upon British trade, but the British men-of-war had so completely gained the upper hand of their adversaries that very few French ships, public or private, were left at sea. The activity and success of the American privateers, therefore, took the British government and the British mercantile interest completely by surprise. Hundreds of merchantmen were captured in the Atlantic, and in the West Indies the privateers cut vessels out of harbors protected by batteries, and landed to plunder the plantations. The island of Jamaica was for some time practically blockaded by them. At first the British warships could do little with them; and the merchants cried out bitterly because of the failure to protect them.

As rapidly as possible the British naval authorities gathered the swiftest frigates and sloops to employ against these cruisers; and there resulted a process of natural selection so severe that the type of privateer soon became altered. At the outset almost any craft was used; but before the first year of the war had closed all the small and slow vessels were captured or shut up in port, and a peculiar species of craft was developed. She was of large size, with a numerous crew, so as to man the prizes,

and was armed with one heavy gun, or "long tom," and several lighter pieces for use at close quarters. She was sometimes a schooner, and sometimes a brig or a ship, but always built on fine lines, and with extreme lightness, so as to possess astonishing speed. There were no more beautiful craft in existence than these graceful, venomous, swift-sailing privateers; and as commerce destroyers they had not then their equals in the entire world.[1]

The first nine months of the war ended with the balance entirely in favour of the Americans. Even at the outbreak of hostilities the British had, scattered along the American coast and among the West India Islands, three or four times as many ships as there were in the American navy, and to those there had been added many others, including heavy two-deckers; but they had not settled down to any definite plan for seriously interfering with the cruises of the regular warships, or for sweeping the privateers from the seas. The American trade had suffered severely; but so had the British. Infinitely more important, however, than such material suffering, short of actual crippling, were the shame and smart felt by the British public at the American naval victories. Commerce destroying was annoying and vexatious, and it might prove sufficiently serious to

[1] Adams, vols. vii. and viii., has treated better than any other historian the careers and importance of the privateers. If he could have seen Mahan's book before writing his own, he would doubtless have laid more stress on the unsatisfactory results of trying to substitute commerce destroyers for fighting ships.

incline an already disheartened combatant to peace; but no amount of destruction of commerce could cripple a thoroughly resolute antagonist, nor, giving heart to the nation which inflicted the loss, make it thrill with that warlike pride and determination to conquer which do so much toward winning victory. The two prime objects to be attained in successful warfare are to cripple the antagonist and to give heart and confidence to one's own side. The first object could not be attained by the little American navy, for it was powerless to inflict appreciable damage to the colossal sea might of England; but the second object it could and did achieve. On land the American attempts to invade Canada resulted in humiliating disasters, and the effects of the victorious sea fights were very great in offsetting the mortification and depression which those disasters caused.

In England the sea fights caused as much excitement as in America, though of a wholly different kind. Neither the British government nor the British people, and least of all the British Navy, had dreamed it possible that on sea they would suffer any serious annoyance from America. The prowess of the American frigates and sloops, the hawk-like predatory speed of the American privateers, and the energy displayed by men-of-warsmen and privateersmen alike, were so many disagreeable surprises. The material loss to the merchants was heavy, whereas the material loss to the navy was

trifling, so far as affecting Great Britain's naval strength was concerned. Nevertheless, it was this last loss which infinitely outweighed the other, as was inevitable and proper with a proud, self-confident, and warlike nation. In seven months Great Britain had suffered from the infant navy of the United States, in five single-ship contests, severer moral loss than she had suffered in all the single-ship contests of the preceding twenty years' warfare with the nations of Europe.

Such a result was almost paralysing, and naturally produced inordinate boastfulness and self-exaltation on the one side, and bitter shame and anger on the other. The victors, the greater to exalt their glory, sought to minimise the difference of force in their favour, and insisted that the contending ships were practically on an equality; which was not only absurdly untrue, but a discredit to their own intelligence, for, of course, it was highly to the credit of America to have built ships more efficient than any then afloat. The vanquished, to extenuate their defeats, attributed them entirely to the difference in force, and enormously exaggerated this, crying out that the American 44's were "disguised 74's," and that building them was a characteristic piece of "Yankee cunning" to lure brave British captains into unequal combat. The attention paid in Parliament and in the London press to these victories was a sufficient tribute to their importance. The *Times*, smarting under the need to lay stress upon a differ-

ence in force which British seamen had been accustomed to disregard, wrote,

"Good God! that a few short months should have so altered the tone of British sentiment! Is it true, or is it not, that our Navy was accustomed to hold the American in utter contempt? Is it true, or is it not, that the *Guerrière* sailed up and down the American coast with her name painted in large characters on her sails, in boyish defiance of Commodore Rodgers?"

Eighty-five British ships were on the American station at the beginning of hostilities.

"We have since sent out more line-of-battle ships and heavier frigates. Surely we must now mean to smother the American Navy. A very short time before the capture of the *Guerrière*, an American frigate was an object of ridicule to our honest tars. Now the prejudice is actually setting the other way, and great pains seem to be taken by the friends of ministers to prepare the public for the surrender of a British 74 to an opponent lately so much contemned."

The *Pilot*, the chief maritime authority, gave full expression to the feelings with which the British public generally regarded these events: —

"The public will learn, with sentiments which we shall not presume to anticipate, that a third British frigate has struck to an American. This is an occurrence which calls for serious reflection — this, and the fact stated in one paper of yesterday, that *Lloyd's List* contains notice of upwards of five hundred British vessels captured in seven months by the Americans, five hundred merchantmen, and three frigates! Can these statements be true, and can the

English people hear them unmoved? Any one who had predicted such a result of an American war this time last year would have been treated as a madman or a traitor. He would have been told, if his opponents had condescended to argue with him, that long ere seven months had elapsed the American flag would be swept from the seas, the contemptible navy of the United States annihilated, and their maritime arsenals rendered a heap of ruins. Yet down to this moment not a single American frigate has struck her flag. They insult and laugh at our want of enterprise and vigour. They leave their ports when they please, and return to them when it suits their convenience; they traverse the Atlantic; they beset the West India Islands; they advance to the very chops of the Channel; they parade along the coasts of South America; nothing chases, nothing intercepts, nothing engages them but to yield them triumph."

Canning, in open Parliament, expressed the bitter anger felt by the whole governing class. He stated that the loss of the frigates had affected the country as it could be affected only by the most violent convulsions of nature, and he returned to the subject again and again, saying "It never entered into my mind that the mighty naval power of England would be allowed to sit idle while our commerce was swept from the surface of the Atlantic." And again, "It cannot be too deeply felt that the sacred spell of the invincibility of the British Navy was broken by these unfortunate captures."

Most significant of all was the fact that the Admiralty issued an order forbidding the 18-pounder

frigates thereafter to do battle with the American 24-pounder frigates. This was not a confession of inferiority, as has been said by some American writers; but it was distinctly a renunciation of any claim of superiority. The American 44 was no more superior to the British 38-gun frigate than the French 74 was to the English 74, for the main-deck battery of the French two-decker carried a gun which threw a shot weighing forty-three English pounds, whereas the main-deck guns of the British ships of the line were only 32's. The difference, therefore, was greater in favour of the French ships of the line, as compared with their British opponents, than the difference between the victor and the vanquished in the famous single-ship duels of 1812. The victories of Nelson and Jervis had been gained against odds much greater than those encountered by the frigates which succumbed to the *Constitution* and the *United States*. Time and again, moreover, the British had won against odds as great, or greater, in single combat. The French 18-pounder gun threw a shot weighing twenty-one pounds English; whereas, owing to the short weight of the American shot, the American 24-pounder usually threw but a little over twenty-two; so that, as compared with the old opponents whom the British frigate captains had so often vanquished, their new American foes threw but one and one-half pound more metal from each gun of the main battery.

The difference in the size and stoutness of the

ships, in the numbers of the crews, and in the calibre of the guns accounted for much in the result, but it by no means accounted for all; and in the two sloop actions it was of little or no moment. The other element, which entered quite as decisively into the contest, was the superior efficiency of the Americans, especially in gunnery. The British had grown over-confident and careless. They had learned to lean overmuch upon what Canning called "the sacred spell of the invincibility of the British Navy," and they needed to learn the lesson that this sacred spell can always be readily broken by any opponent who, with equal courage, shows superiority in skill, and especially in cool forethought and preparation. Superiority in courage and skill combined can wrest victory from great odds, and no amount of skill will atone for the lack of daring, of unflinching resolution, and of dogged capacity to stand punishment; but where courage is equal, skill will always win; and where courage and skill are both equal, then the side which has the best ships and guns will overwhelm the other, no matter what may be the flags under which the combatants fight.

The best commentary on the five victories thus far described is that given by the French Admiral, Jurien de La Gravière: and it is significant of the profound impression they created that, in a work devoted to the gigantic naval battles of the fleets that fought under and against Nelson, a French admiral, to whom the contest between the British

and the Americans had no other interest than the lesson it taught, should have devoted so much space to these duels, singling them out above all the other single-ship contests of the twenty-five years' war.

"When the American Congress declared war on England in 1812," he says,[1] "it seemed as if this unequal conflict would crush her navy in the act of being born; instead, it but fertilised the germ. It is only since that epoch that the United States has taken rank among maritime powers. Some combats of frigates, corvettes, and brigs, insignificant without doubt as regards the material results, sufficed to break the charm which protected the standard of St. George, and taught Europe what she could have already learned from some of our combats, if the louder noise of our defeats had not drowned the glory, that the only invincibles on the sea are good seamen and good artillerists.

"The English covered the ocean with their cruisers when this unknown navy, composed of six frigates and a few small craft hitherto hardly numbered, dared to establish its cruisers at the mouth of the Channel, in the very centre of the British power. But already the *Constitution* had captured the *Guerrière* and *Java*, the *United States* had made a prize of the *Macedonian*, the *Wasp* of the *Frolic*, and the *Hornet* of the *Peacock*. The honour of the new flag was established. England, humiliated, tried to attribute her multiplied reverses to the unusual size of the vessels which Congress had had constructed in 1799, and which did the fighting in 1812. She wished to refuse them the name of frigates, and called them, not without some appearance of reason, disguised line-of-battle ships. Since then all maritime powers have copied these gigantic models, as the

[1] 'Guerres Maritimes,' ii. 284 (edition of 1881).

result of the war of 1812 obliged England herself to change her naval material; but if they had employed, instead of frigates, cut-down 74's, it would still be difficult to explain the prodigious success of the Americans. . . .

"In an engagement which terminated in less than half an hour, the English frigate *Guerrière*, completely dismasted, had fifteen men killed, sixty-three wounded, and more than thirty shot below the water-line. She sank twelve hours after the combat. The *Constitution*, on the contrary, had but seven men killed and seven wounded, and did not lose a mast. As soon as she had replaced a few cut ropes and changed a few sails, she was in condition, even by the testimony of the British historian, to take another *Guerrière*. The *United States* took an hour and a half to recapture the *Macedonian*, and the same difference made itself felt in the damage suffered by the two ships. The *Macedonian* had her masts shattered, two of her main-deck and all her spar-deck guns disabled, more than a hundred shots had penetrated the hull, and over a third of the crew had suffered by the hostile fire. The American frigate, on the contrary, had to regret but five men killed and seven wounded; her guns had been fired each sixty-six times to the *Macedonian's* thirty-six. The combat of the *Constitution* and the *Java* lasted two hours; and was the most bloody of these three engagements. The *Java* only struck when she had been razed like a sheer hulk; she had twenty-two men killed and one hundred and two wounded.

. . . . . .

"This war should be studied with unceasing diligence; the pride of the two peoples to whom naval affairs are so generally familiar has cleared all the details and laid bare all the episodes; and through the sneers which the victors should have spared, merely out of care for their own glory,

L. of C.

at every step can be seen the great truth, that there is only success for those who know how to prepare it.

. . . . . .

"It belongs to us to judge impartially these marine events, too much exalted perhaps by a national vanity one is tempted to excuse. The Americans showed in the war of 1812 a great deal of skill and resolution; but if, as they have asserted, the chances had always been perfectly equal between them and their adversaries, if they had only owed their triumphs to the intrepidity of Hull, Decatur, and Bainbridge, there would be for us but little interest in recalling the struggle. We need not seek lessons in courage outside of our own history. On the contrary, what is to be well considered is that the ships of the United States constantly fought with the chances in their favour, and it is on this that the American Government should found its true title to glory. . . . The Americans in 1812 had secured to themselves the advantage of a better organisation (than the English)."

After speaking of the heavier metal and greater number of men of the American ships, he continues: —

"And yet only an enormous superiority in the precision and rapidity of their fire can explain the difference in the losses sustained by the combatants.

"The American fire showed itself to be as accurate as it was rapid. On occasions when the roughness of the sea would seem to render all aim excessively uncertain, the effects of their artillery were not less murderous than under more advantageous conditions.

"Nor was the skill of their gunners the only cause to which the Americans owed their success. Their ships were

faster; the crews, composed of chosen men, manœuvred with uniformity and precision; their captains had that practical knowledge which is only to be acquired by long experience of the sea; and it is not to be wondered at that the *Constitution*, when chased during three days by a squadron of five English frigates, succeeded in escaping, by surpassing them in manœuvring and by availing herself of every ingenious resource and skilful expedient that maritime science could suggest. . . . To a marine exalted by success, but rendered negligent by the very habit of victory, the Congress only opposed the best of vessels and most formidable of armaments."

THE TURN OF THE TIDE

THE American coast blockaded — Effect of the blockade — Raids on the coast — Retaliation by the privateers — Failure of expectations on both sides — Fleets the true commerce-destroyers — The *Shannon* and the *Chesapeake* — The power of good organisation — The *Pelican* and the *Argus* — The *Enterprise* and the *Boxer* — Failure of the attack on Norfolk — Outrages at Hampton — Inadequacy of the American gunboats — The *Junon* in Delaware Bay — Attack on the *Asp* — Capture of the *Surveyor* — Affair in the Stone River — Capture of the *Lottery* — Polkinghorne and the privateers — Cochrane succeeds Warren — Cruise of the *Essex* — The *Phœbe* and *Cherub*, and the *Essex* and *Essex Junior*.

THROUGHOUT the year 1812, and the beginning of the year 1813, Britain had made no effective use whatever of her tremendous power at sea, so far as the United States was concerned. She had suffered from overweening self-confidence in her own prowess, and from overweening contempt for her foe. During the first year of war the utter futility of the American land attacks on Canada could fairly be matched by the utter inefficiency of the efforts of the British both to destroy the little American navy, and to employ their own huge Navy so as to make it a determining factor in the struggle. But by the spring of 1813 this was changed. The British were a practical people, and they faced facts — thereby showing capacity to turn these facts to their own advan-

tage. The dream of British naval invincibility, the dream that the British warships could win against any reasonable odds, was a pleasant dream, and the awakening was extremely disagreeable. Nevertheless, a dream it was, and the British recognised it as such, and acted accordingly, with the natural result that thereafter the Americans suffered more than the British at sea. The 18-pounder frigates were forbidden to engage single-handed the 24-pounder frigates of the Americans,[1] and where possible they were directed to cruise in couples, or in small squadrons, so as to be able with certainty to overpower any single antagonist, great or small. No sufficient steps were taken to bring the average standard of fighting efficiency, especially in gunnery, up to the American level, and in consequence there were some defeats yet in store; but the best captains in the British Navy were already as good as any to be found in America, or anywhere else, and it was now the turn of the Americans to suffer from over-confidence, while the British, wherever possible, made dexterous use of their superior forces. After this period no British frigate was captured, while three American frigates surrendered, one to an opponent of superior fighting efficiency, and the other two to superior force, skilfully used. The American sloops did better, but even their career was chequered by defeat.

[1] The order recites that they are "forbidden to engage" and are to "retreat" from such a foe. — 'The Croker Papers,' i. 44.

The important factor on the British side was the use of the Navy to blockade the American coast. When war was declared, the Napoleonic struggle was at its height, and the chances seemed on the whole to favour Napoleon. But, by the spring of 1813, the Grand Army had gone to its death in the snowclad wastes of Russia, and Wellington had completely bested the French marshals in Spain, so that it was merely a question of time as to when he would invade France. In Germany the French were steadily losing ground; and all the nations of Europe were combining, for the overthrow of that splendid, evil, and terrible genius before whom they had so long cowered. Britain could, therefore, afford to turn her attention to America in earnest. As yet she could not spare adequate land forces, but she could and did spare a sufficiency of battleships, frigates, and sloops to make a real blockade of the American coast. After May 1813 the blockade was complete from New York southward. In the autumn it was extended further east; but it was not until the following year that it was applied with the same iron severity to the New England coast, for the British government hoped always that the seditious spirit in New England would manifest itself in open revolt.

After the blockade had been once established, commerce ceased; and the only vessels that could slip out were the fast-sailing privateers and regular cruisers, whose captains combined daring, caution,

and skill in such equal proportions as to enable them to thread their way through the innumerable dangers that barred the path. The privateers frequently failed, and even the regular cruisers were by no means always successful; while the risks were too great for merchantmen habitually to encounter them. Georgia touched Florida, and so could do a little trade through the Spanish dominions; and the northern New England coast lay open for some time to come; but elsewhere the ships rotted at the ports, though the shipwrights found employment in building the swift privateers, and the sailor-folk in manning them.

The white-sailed British frigates hovered in front of every seaport of note, standing on and off with ceaseless, unwearying vigilance by day and night, in fair weather and foul, through the summer and through the winter. In the great estuaries fleets rode at anchor, or sailed hither and thither menacing destruction. No town, large or small, could deem itself safe; and every great river was a possible highroad for the entrance of the enemy. There was not a strip of the American coast over which the Americans could call themselves masters, seaward of the point where the water grew deep enough to float a light craft of war.

The one lesson which should be most clearly taught by this war is the folly of a nation's relying for safety upon anything but its own readiness to repel attack; and, in the case of a power with an

extended seaboard, this readiness implies the possession of a great fighting navy. The utter failure of Jefferson's embargo and his other measures of what he termed "peaceable coercion," teach their part of the lesson so plainly that it would seem impossible to misread it; but the glory won by their little navy has tended to blind Americans to the fact that this navy was too small to do anything except win glory. It lacked the power to harm anything but Britain's pride, and it was too weak to parry a single blow delivered by the British along the coast, when once they realised that their task was serious, and set about it in earnest. Twenty ships-of-the-line, as good of their kind as were the frigates and sloops, would have rendered the blockade impossible, even if they had not prevented the war; and, judged merely from the monetary standpoint, they would have repaid to the nation their cost a thousand times over by the commerce they would have saved, and the business losses they would have averted. As it was, the Americans were utterly powerless to offer any effective resistance to the British blockade; for it is too late to try to build a fleet, or take any other effective steps, when once the war has begun. The nerveless administration at Washington did not even take steps to defend the capital city.

It is the fashion to speak of the people as misrepresented by the politicians; but in this case certainly the people deserved just the government they had. Indeed, it is curious and instructive as well as mel-

ancholy to see how powerless the Americans as a whole were to make good the shortcomings of which they had been guilty prior to the declaration of war. It is especially instructive for those Americans, and indeed those Englishmen, who are fond of saying that either country needs no protection merely because it cannot be directly invaded by land, and who try to teach us that the immense reserve strength which each nation undoubtedly possesses can be immediately drawn on to make good any deficiencies in preparation at the outbreak of a war. This is much like telling a prize-fighter that he need not train because he has such an excellent constitution that he may draw on it to make good defects in his preparation for the ring. The truth seems to be that, in naval matters especially, nothing can supply the lack of adequate preparation and training before the outbreak of war. The lead which is lost at the beginning cannot be regained save by superhuman effort, and after enormous waste of strength. It is too late to mature plans for defence when the enemy is close at hand, for he continually breaks up and renders abortive the various little movements which, if given time, would become formidable. There is more chance of remedying defective preparation on land than on sea, merely because the fighting machinery for use on the sea is so delicate and complicated that ample opportunity must be given, not merely to produce it, but to learn to use it aright. This was true in the days of the American and

French revolutions; it is infinitely truer now, when the fleets of Rodney and Nelson have been left as far behind modern navies as they stood ahead of the galleys of Alcibiades and Hanno.

The failure of the Americans to devise any adequate measure for breaking the British blockade is partially due to this fundamental difficulty in making preparations when the time for preparation has passed. There was also a curious supineness among the people as a whole, which was, if anything, even more noticeable among those States which were clamorous for war than among those which, to their deep discredit, clamoured for peace. Virginia and the Southern States did not falter in their determination to continue the war, and the New England States betrayed an utter lack of patriotism in their councils, and greatly hampered the national government in its feeble efforts to uphold the national honour. Nevertheless, astounding to relate, the New England States actually did more than the South Atlantic States in the war itself, and this, not because they did so much, but because the South Atlantic States did so little. Massachusetts and Virginia were the typical States of their two sections, and Massachusetts gave more men and more money to carry on the war than did Virginia, apart from furnishing a very large proportion of the sailors who manned the war ships and privateers, while Virginia furnished hardly any. Not even the continual presence of the British at their very doors

could rouse the Virginians to respectable resistance; and the Marylanders were not much better. It was in the Chesapeake that the main part of the blockading fleet lay; it was along the shores of that great bay that the ravages of the British were most severely felt; yet the Virginians and Marylanders, during the two years when the enemy lay on their coasts, insulting them at will, never organised any attack whatsoever upon them, and took inadequate and imperfect measures even for defence. The truth seems to be that the nation was yet in the gristle, and that its awkward strength was useless, as it could not be concentrated or applied to any one object. There was no public training, and indeed no public feeling, which could put at the disposal of the national government large bodies of disciplined men sufficient for effective use to a given end; and the men in control of the national government had been bred in a political school which on its administrative side was so silly that they could not have used this power even had it been given them. New York and Philadelphia were never directly menaced during the war; but once or twice they thought they were, and the way in which they proposed to meet the danger was by setting the citizens to labour on earthworks in the neighbourhood, each profession, trade, or association going out in a body on some one day—the lawyers on one day, the butchers on another, the United Irishmen on another, and so on, and so on. This conception of the way to perform

military duty does not require comment; it would be grossly unfair to compare it with the attitude even of unwarlike mediæval burghers, for, after all, the mediæval burghers had some idea of arms, and the shopkeepers, day-labourers, and professional men of New York and Philadelphia had not.

Where such was the conception of how to carry on the war, there is small cause for wonder that the war was allowed to carry on itself pretty much as it pleased. Had the people displayed the energy, the resolution, and the efficiency which their descendants on both sides showed half a century later in the Civil War, no amount of courage or of military sagacity on the part of the British could have prolonged the contest for any length of time. But there was no such showing. No concerted or resolute effort was made by the people as a whole. Individual shipbuilders and contractors showed great energy and capacity. Individual ship-captains at sea, individual generals on land, did remarkably well, showing military aptitude of a high order: and every such commander, by sea or by land, was able to make the seamen or the troops under him formidable and well-disciplined fighters in an astonishingly short space of time; for the Americans, whether afloat or on shore, were cool, hardy, resolute, and fertile in resources and expedients. But no commander ever had more than a small squadron or a diminutive army with which to work, for the great mass of the Americans did nothing to bring the war

to a close. The task about which the people as a whole refused seriously to concern themselves, and which the government lacked decision and character to perform, was left to the shipwrights, to the seafaring folk, to the admirably trained officers of the little regular navy, and, on shore, to such commanders and troops as the campaigns themselves gradually developed: and all acted more or less independently of one another, or with only such concert as their own intelligence demanded.

The pressure brought to bear on America by the British blockade was exceedingly effective, but it was silent, and so historians have tended to forget it. They have chronicled with pride or regret according to their nationality, the capture of an occasional British by an American sloop, but they have paid little heed to the ceaseless strain on the American resources caused by the blockade. Its mere existence inflicted a direct material loss to the American people a hundredfold greater than the entire American navy was able to inflict on Great Britain from the beginning to the end of its gallant career in this war. The very fact that the workings of the blockade were ceaseless and almost universal makes it difficult to realise their importance. It told heavily against the coasting trade, though less heavily than against foreign commerce; and it revived an almost archaic industry, that of the waggoners, who travelled slowly, parallel with the coastline, to carry with an infinitely greater labour and

expense the goods that had formerly gone in the sloops and schooners. The return to this primitive method of interchange implied much of the suffering of primitive times, for it meant that one part of the country might lack the necessaries of which another part possessed an over-abundance. As soon as the blockade was established it created the widest inequalities in the prices of commodities in different parts of the country.[1] Flour cost nearly three times as much in Boston as in Richmond, and rice four times as much in Philadelphia as in Charleston, while imported articles like sugar rose fivefold in price. Exports practically ceased by the close of 1813. In that year they amounted to but two hundred thousand dollars in New York as against over twelve million in the year preceding the outbreak of the war, while, during the same period, Virginia's original exports of five million dollars fell off to twenty thousand. The import duties diminished with even greater rapidity, until finally they could only be raised in New England. The ruin was widespread. As yet the people of the United States were not manufacturers, but small farmers, traders, and seafarers. The trader of the towns saw all his trade destroyed, and could give no employment to the sailors who had formerly worked for him; while the farmer grew crops which could not be moved to any remunerative market, so that no ready money came in to him; and yet for whatever he needed,

[1] Adams, vii. 263.

save what he himself produced, he had to pay five times as much as formerly.

The coast dwellers in Virginia and Maryland were forced to experience, not merely the weight of the blockade, but also actual physical contact with the enemy. Another British squadron lay in the Delaware, and forays were made here and there along the coast. New York was blockaded, but very little was done save to put a stop to commerce. There was another squadron at Nantucket, with Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, Nelson's flag-captain, as commodore. Hardy's ships closed southern New England to the world, but they did very little in the way of attacking or harassing the coast itself, for Hardy, one of the most gallant captains who ever lived, a man who had won his spurs in the greatest sea fights of all time, and who prided himself on his ability to meet armed foes in battle, felt impatient at mere marauding, and countenanced it with reluctance.

The directly opposite policy was pursued in Chesapeake Bay. There Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren was in command, but the chief work was done by Rear-Admiral Sir George Cockburn. Cockburn organised a few of the lightest ships of Warren's fleet, and some captured schooners, into a flotilla with which he could penetrate at will the creeks and rivers. He was a capable, brave, energetic man, hating his foes and enjoying his work; and he carried out with scrupulous fidelity the order to harass the American coast. Not merely did he

attack any militia that might from time to time assemble, but he also destroyed towns and hamlets, and worked widespread havoc throughout the country that lay within striking distance of tide-water. Houses were burned, farms plundered, stores pillaged, and small towns destroyed, while the larger places, and even Baltimore, were thrown into a panic which caused the inhabitants to neglect their business, but did not cause them to take such efficient measures for self-defence as the exercise of reasonable forethought would have demanded. Usually Cockburn and his followers refrained from maltreating the people personally, and most of the destruction they caused was at places where the militia made some resistance; but, when plundering once began, it was quite impossible for the officers to restrain some of the very men who most needed restraint.

The people were of course greatly exasperated at the marauding, and the American newspapers far and near, and most American writers then and afterwards, were loud in their denunciation of the Rear-Admiral and his methods. Exactly how far these were or were not defensible, it is difficult to say. It is, of course, a mere matter of convention to discriminate between the destruction of private property on sea and land. Armed vessels, British and American, destroyed or captured any private property of the enemy which they could find afloat; and if there were sufficient cause, or if there were an object of sufficient importance to be attained, the combatants

were certainly warranted in destroying such property ashore. Cockburn's course was in many respects the same as that of Sheridan's at one crisis in the Civil War; and there was certainly little in it to warrant the warmth of the execrations heaped upon him by his foes — which were indeed somewhat in the nature of a tribute to his efficiency. At the same time it may be admitted that his work was not of the kind in which the best type of fighting man would find any pleasure, or which he would carry on longer than was absolutely necessary; and for some of the revolting details there was small excuse. There is room for question as to whether the comparatively trifling loss inflicted on the Americans did much beyond irritating them. It certainly failed to cow them, though equally certainly it failed to rouse them to effective resistance.

In short, it may be doubted whether the course followed by Cockburn reflected any particular credit upon, or caused much, if any, benefit to, the British side. There can be no doubt, however, of the discredit attaching to the Americans for their conduct. A people which lets its shores be insulted with impunity incurs, if not greater blame, at least greater contempt, than the people which does the plundering. If here and there Cockburn burned a hamlet or two which he ought to have spared, his offence was really small when compared with the disgrace brought on the American name by the supineness shown by the people of the threatened neighbour-

hoods. They did nothing effectively of any kind for their own defence. Indeed, for the most part they did nothing at all, except gather bodies of militia whenever there was an alarm, and so keep the inhabitants constantly worried and harassed by always calling them to arms, and yet merely providing almost worthless defenders. And the nation as a whole was as much to blame as the States directly menaced.

The retaliation of the Americans took the form of privateering. By the time the blockade began to be effective, the American privateers had developed into a well-recognised type. Small vessels had been abandoned. Brigs and ships were common, and so were schooners of large size. Everything was sacrificed to speed; and the chief feature of the armament was the single long-range gun, fitted to bring-to a fleeing merchantman at a considerable distance. The privateers thus had neither the armament nor the build, not to speak of the discipline, which would have enabled them to withstand regular men-of-war of the same size in close action, although the crews were large, the better to man the prizes. In other words, the privateer was a commerce destroyer pure and simple, built to run and not to fight; although, even as a commerce destroyer, she was less effective than a government vessel would be, because she was built to make money in a particularly risky species of gambling; and so, instead of destroying prizes, she sought to send them in,

with the result that nearly half were recaptured when once the British began to make their blockade effective. A good many privateers went out from the ports of the Southern States, and Baltimore was a famous centre for them; but the great majority sailed from the New England and Middle States.

The ravages of these privateers were very serious.[1] The British trade suffered heavily from them, much more than from the closing of the American ports — the argument upon which Jefferson had placed so much reliance in his vain effort to bring Britain to terms. In fact, the closing of the American ports by the war made comparatively little difference to England, because it was almost immediately accompanied by the opening of the trade with continental Europe. The crushing disasters that befell Napoleon's great army in Russia meant the immediate relaxation of his system in the Baltic; and after he was driven out of Germany, toward the close of 1813, all the German ports were again thrown open to the British merchants, so that their trade grew by leaps and bounds, and the loss of the American market was far more than made good by the gain of markets elsewhere. After the overthrow of France, in the spring of 1814, England was left

[1] Adams, in his 'History,' gives the best account both of the blockade and the privateers. The details of some of the voyages of the latter are preserved in Coggeshall's 'History of American Privateers.'

without an enemy, excepting the United States, and her commerce went where it pleased, unharmed except by the American privateers.

When she was thus left free to use her vast strength solely against America, it seemed inevitable that the latter should be overthrown. But, in the war of 1812, what seemed probable rarely came to pass; and the failures on both sides caused the utmost astonishment at the time, and are difficult to fully explain now. At the outbreak of the war the general opinion in America was that Canada would speedily be conquered; and the general opinion in Europe was that the United States' navy would be brushed from the sea, and that the American privateers would be got under just as those of France had been got under. Neither expectation was fulfilled. During the first two years the Americans made no headway in the effort to conquer feebly-held Canada. When, in 1814, Britain turned her undivided attention to an enemy which with one hand she had held at bay for two years, the inevitable outcome seemed to be her triumph; yet she in her turn failed in her aggressive movements against the United States just as America had failed in her aggressive movements against Canada, and her giant Navy proved unequal to the task of scourging from the seas the American men-of-war and privateers. Contrary to her experience in all former wars with European powers, she found that the American privateers were able to operate far from their base,

and to do great damage without any great fighting navy to back them up; and as the war progressed they grew ever bolder in their ravages round the coasts of the British Isles themselves.

There are two lessons, which at first sight seem contradictory, to be learned from the history of the privateers in this war. In the first place, their history does teach that very much can be accomplished by commerce destroying, if more directly efficient methods cannot be used. The American privateers rendered invaluable service to their country by their daring, and the severity of their ravages. In those days sailing vessels were not hampered as vessels would be hampered under like conditions in the days of steam; they did not need coaling stations, and there was much less danger of their getting out of repair. The American privateer was a faster ship than any previously seen on the waters, and she was more daringly and skilfully handled than any ships of her kind had ever been handled by Europeans. She could usually overtake any merchantman, and usually escape any man-of-war. Of course, in the end she was almost certain to encounter some man-of-war from whom she could not escape; but this might not be until after several profitable voyages; and though, on the average, privateering was a business in which the losses equalled the gains, yet the chances of success were as great as the risks, and it was a kind of gambling which appealed peculiarly to adventurous spirits. The commerce

destroying put a severe strain on the British mercantile and seafaring communities.

Nevertheless, admitting and emphasising all this does not mean the admission that privateering was the way in which America could best have used her strength. The privateers did great and real damage to England, and though at first they caused more irritation than alarm, they inflicted such punishment upon the merchants and the seamen as materially to increase the disposition of the British for peace. But what they accomplished cannot be compared with what was accomplished by the British Navy. The American privateers harassed the commerce of England, but the British blockading fleet destroyed the commerce of America. The ravages of the one inclined the British people to peace; but the steady pressure of the other caused such a bitter revolt against the war in parts of America as nearly to produce a civil conflict. The very success of the privateers was a damage to the American navy, for all the seamen wished to enlist on board them instead of on board the regular ships of war. Regular ships were better commerce destroyers, and, above all, battleships would have accomplished far more, had the energies of the nation been turned towards their production instead of to the production of private armed ships. In the coast towns the number of seamen who served on board the privateers could have manned scores of fast government vessels built on the same lines; and, as these vessels would not

have tried to save their prizes, they would have inflicted more damage on the enemy. Undoubtedly this would have been an advantage, so far as it went; and perhaps, after the outbreak of the war, it was too late to try to build a great fighting fleet. But in reality what was needed was an infinitely more radical change. The substitution of the government commerce destroyer for the privateer would have done some good, but it could not have accomplished anything decisive. What was needed was the substitution for all these commerce destroyers of a great fighting fleet. Such a fleet by its mere existence would doubtless have prevented the war. It would certainly, if handled as well as the frigates, sloops, and privateers were handled, have prevented a blockade, even if war had been declared; and American commerce, instead of being destroyed outright, would merely have suffered heavily, just as the British commerce suffered. The men employed in the privateers would have manned enough ships of the line to have brought all this about. A fighting fleet would have prevented the losses and humiliations which the commerce destroyers were utterly powerless to avert. Moreover, it would have done more real and lasting damage than the commerce destroyers could possibly do. Commerce destroying was a makeshift. It was a very useful makeshift, and much good came from the way in which it was utilised; but it must not be forgotten that it was only a makeshift, and that the commerce

destroyers were in no sense satisfactory substitutes for great fighting ships of the line, fitted to wrest victory from the enemy by destroying his powers, both of offence and defence, and able to keep the war away from the home coasts.

The reverses which the British Navy had encountered in all the earlier sea fights were mortifying to a degree. It was now the turn of the Americans to suffer similar mortifications. Perhaps the chief cause of the British disasters had been an ignorant self-confidence combined with an equally ignorant contempt of the enemy, which rendered the British indifferent to odds, and indifferent also to that thorough training which could alone make their ships into efficient fighting machines. The same undue self-confidence and undue disregard for the prowess of the enemy were now to cause the Americans the loss of one of their frigates and the death of one of their most gallant captains.

In May, 1812, Captain James Lawrence, the commander of the *Hornet*, was promoted to the command of the *Chesapeake*, 38, which was being fitted out at Boston. Her crew had just been discharged, and, as she was regarded as an unlucky ship, and as there had been much dissatisfaction over their failure to get prize-money, many of the crew refused to re-enlist, preferring to ship in some of the numerous privateers. A few of the *Constitution's* old crew came on board, and those, and the men who had been in the *Chesapeake* during her former voyage,

were excellent material. The rest were raw hands, including an unusually large number of foreigners. About forty of these were British. There were also a number of Portuguese, one of whom, a boatswain's mate, almost brought about a mutiny among the crew, which was only pacified by giving the men prize cheques. The last draft of the new hands was not only entirely untrained, but also came on board so late that when the ship was captured their hammocks and bags were still lying in the boats stowed over the booms. A man like Lawrence would speedily have got such a crew into shape. A cruise of a very few weeks would doubtless have enabled him to put the ship in as good trim as the *Hornet* was when under his command. But she was in no condition to meet an exceptionally good frigate before she was eight hours out of port. Even his officers, with one exception, were new to the ship, and the third and fourth lieutenants were not regularly commissioned as such, but were only midshipmen, acting for the first time in higher positions. Lawrence himself was of course new to both the officers and the crew.

In such circumstances it was clearly his duty to try to avoid an encounter with the enemy until his ship should be in good condition to fight. Unfortunately for him, however, his experiences in the war had given him the same unreasonable feeling of superiority over his foes as the latter had themselves felt a year earlier. He had spent three weeks in

blockading a sloop-of-war, the *Bonne Citoyenne*, which was of equal force with his own, and which yet resolutely declined to fight. He had captured another sloop-of-war which was, it is true, inferior in force, but which was also infinitely inferior in point of fighting efficiency; and this capture had been made in spite of the presence of another sloop-of-war, which, nevertheless, did not venture out to attack him. He had, as he deemed, good ground to believe that his foes were so much inferior in prowess as to make success almost certain. Indeed, had the frigate which he was about to attack been no more formidable, as regards the skill of her captain and the training of her crew, than the ships which the Americans had hitherto encountered, Lawrence's conduct might very possibly have been justified by the result.

But the British frigate *Shannon*, 38, which was then cruising off Boston harbour, was under Captain Philip Bowes Vere Broke, who had commanded her for seven years, and who was one of the ablest captains in the British service. A British naval historian has explained why it was that the *Shannon* proved herself so much more formidable than her sister frigates.

"There was another point in which the generality of the British crews, as compared with any one American crew, were miserably deficient: that is, skill in the art of gunnery. While the American seamen were constantly firing at marks, the British seamen, except in particular cases,

scarcely did so once in a year; and some ships could be named on board which not a shot had been fired in this way for upward of three years. Nor was the fault wholly the captain's. The instructions under which he was bound to act forbade him to use, during the first six months after the ship had received her armament, more shots per month than amounted to a third in number of the upper-deck guns; and after these six months only half the quantity. Many captains never put a shot in the guns till an enemy appeared; they employed the leisure time of the men in handling the sails and in decorating the ship."

Captain Broke was not one of this kind.

"From the day on which he had joined her, the 14th of September, 1806, the *Shannon* began to feel the effect of her captain's proficiency as a gunner, and zeal for the service. The laying of the ship's ordnance so that it may be correctly fired in a horizontal direction is justly deemed a most important operation, as upon it depends in a great measure the true aim and destructive effect of every future shot she may fire. On board the *Shannon*, at her first outfit, this was attended to by Captain Broke in person. . . . By drafts from other ships, and the usual means to which a British man-of-war is obliged to resort, the *Shannon* got together a crew; and in the course of a year or two, by the paternal care and excellent regulations of Captain Broke, an undersized, not very well disposed, and, in point of age, rather motley ship's company became as pleasant to command as they would have been dangerous to meet."[1]

The *Shannon's* guns were all carefully sighted; and, moreover, "every day, for about an hour and

[1] James, vi. 196 (Ed. 1837).

a half in the forenoon, when not prevented by chase or the state of the weather, the men were exercised at training the guns, and for the same time in the afternoon in the use of the broadsword, pike, musket, etc. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, both with great guns and with musketry; and Captain Broke, as an additional stimulus beyond the emulation excited, gave a pound of tobacco to every man that put a shot through the bull's eye." He would frequently have a cask thrown overboard, and suddenly order some one gun to be manned to sink the cask.

Captain Broke had sent a challenge to Captain Lawrence, expressing a willingness to meet the latter in a duel in any latitude and longitude he might appoint; for Broke did not expect to be given the great advantage of meeting his antagonist just as the latter was leaving port, and before her crew were in fighting trim; and he possessed a justifiable confidence in the ability of the ship which he commanded to hold her own in any circumstances. It may be mentioned that this letter of challenge was worthy of the gallant writer, being a model of courtesy, manliness, and candour. Unfortunately for Lawrence, he never received it; and he stood out to engage the *Shannon* at midday of June 1st, 1813.[1] Afterwards it was alleged that he engaged against his judgment; but this was undoubtedly not the

[1] Navy Department MSS., 'Captains' Letters,' vol. xxix. No. 1; Lawrence's letter, June 1st, 1813.

case. The British frigate was in sight in the offing, and he sailed out to attack her in the confident hope of victory.

The two ships were very evenly matched, but what superiority there was, was on the American side. The *Chesapeake* carried fifty guns — twenty-eight long 18's on the gun-deck, and, on the spar-deck two long 12's, one long 18, one 12-pr. carronade, and eighteen 32-pr. carronades. There were on board her 379 men all told. The *Shannon* carried fifty-two guns — twenty-eight long 18's on the gun-deck, and, on the spar-deck, four long 9's, one long 6, three 12-pr. carronades, and sixteen 32-pr. carronades, with a crew of 330 men. In guns the two ships were practically equal, but in crew the Americans were superior by fifty men, which, in an engagement at close quarters, ought to have given them the upper hand, if the two crews had been likewise equal in fighting capacity.[1]

At noon the *Chesapeake* weighed anchor, stood out of Boston harbour, and an hour later rounded the lighthouse. The *Shannon* stood off under easy sail. She reefed her topsails, and alternately hauled up and again bore away. With her foresail brailed up, and her maintopsail braced flat and shivering, she surged slowly through the quiet seas, while the *Chesapeake* came down with towering canvas and the white water breaking under her bow. When

[1] Letters of Lieutenant George Budd and Captain Broke, and Brighton's 'Memoir of Admiral Broke.'

Boston lighthouse bore west, distant six leagues, the *Shannon* again hauled up, with her head to the south-east, and lay-to under fighting canvas, stripped to her topsails, topgallant-sails, jib, and spanker. The breeze freshened, and as the *Chesapeake* neared her foe, she took in her studding-sails, topgallant-sails, and royals, got her royal yards on deck, and came down very fast under topsails and jib. At 5.30 P. M., to keep under command and be able to wear if necessary, the *Shannon* put her helm alternately a-lee and a-weather, first keeping a close luff, and then again letting the sails shiver. The *Chesapeake* had hauled up her foresail; and, with three ensigns flying, she steered straight for the *Shannon's* starboard quarter. For a moment Broke feared lest his adversary might pass under the *Shannon's* stern, rake her, and engage her on the quarter; but the American captain sought only a yardarm and yardarm action, to be decided by sheer ability to give and take punishment. He luffed up fifty yards from the *Shannon's* starboard quarter, and squared his mainyard. On board the *Shannon*, the captain of the 14th gun, William Mindham, had been ordered not to fire until it bore into the second main-deck port forward. At 5.50 it was fired, and then the other guns in quick succession from abaft forward, the *Chesapeake* replying with her whole broadside. At 5.53, Lawrence, finding that he was forging ahead, hauled up a little. The *Chesapeake's* guns did murderous damage, but the ship herself suffered even more. The men in the

Shannon's tops could hardly see the deck of the American frigate through the cloud of shivered and splintered wreck that was flying across it. Man after man was killed at the wheel; the fourth lieutenant, the master, and the boatswain fell, and, six minutes after the first gun had been fired, the jib-sheet and foretopsail tie were shot away, and the spanker brails loosened so that the sails blew out, and the ship came up into the wind somewhat. Her quarter was then exposed to her antagonist's broadside, which beat in her stern ports and swept the men from the after-guns. One of the arms-chests on the quarter-deck was blown up by a hand-grenade thrown from the *Shannon*, the smoke shrouding everything from sight for a moment.[1] Broke saw that the *Chesapeake* had stern-way on and was paying slowly off; so he put his helm a-starboard and shivered his mizen-topsail, to keep off the wind and delay the boarding. But at that moment the *Shannon's* jib-stay was shot away (for some of the *Chesapeake's* guns still bore), and, her headsails becoming becalmed, she went off very slowly. In consequence, at six o'clock, the two frigates fell on board one another, the *Chesapeake's* quarter pressing upon the *Shannon's* side just forward of the starboard main-chains; and they were kept in this position by the fluke of the *Shannon's* anchor catching in the *Chesapeake's* quarter port.

[1] Navy Department MSS., 'Captains' Letters,' vol. xxix. No. 10; Bainbridge's letter, June 2nd, 1833.

The *Shannon's* crew had suffered severely, and her decks were running thick with blood; but the trained and seasoned seamen stood to their work with grim indifference. Broke ran forward as the frigates ground against one another. He saw that the Americans were flinching from their quarter-deck guns, and at once ordered the ships to be lashed together, the great guns to cease firing, and the boarders to be called. The boatswain, Mr. Stevens, who had fought in Rodney's action, was foremost in fastening the frigates together, though, as he finished his work, an American seaman hacked his right arm off with a blow from a cutlass.

All was confusion and dismay on board the *Chesapeake*. Lieutenant Augustus Charles Ludlow had been mortally wounded and carried below. Lawrence himself, while standing on the quarter-deck, fatally conspicuous by his full-dress uniform and commanding stature, was shot as the vessels closed by Lieutenant John Law of the Royal Marines. He fell dying, and was carried below, exclaiming, "Don't give up the ship"—a phrase that has since become proverbial among his countrymen. The acting third lieutenant, a midshipman, who was a devoted admirer of Lawrence, helped to carry him below, instead of remaining at his post as he should have done.[1] When he returned it was too late. Indeed, one or two of the younger officers were

[1] See minutes of court-martial on the loss of the *Chesapeake*, given in Ingersoll, i. 396.

stunned and demoralised by the succession of disasters.

While the confusion was at its height, Captain Broke stepped from the *Shannon's* gangway rail on to the muzzle of the *Chesapeake's* aftermost carronade, and thence over the bulwark on to her quarter-deck, followed by about twenty men. As the British came on board, the men on the *Chesapeake's* spar-deck, who had suffered more heavily than any others, whose officers had all been killed or wounded, and who had not the discipline to take unmoved such heavy punishment, deserted their quarters. The Portuguese boatswain's mate removed the gratings of the berth-deck and ran below, followed by many of the crew. On the quarter-deck, almost the only man who made any resistance was the chaplain, Mr. Samuel Livermore, who advanced, firing his pistol at Broke; and Broke in return cut him down with a single stroke. On the upper-deck the only men who behaved well were the marines; but of their original number of forty-four men, fourteen, including Lieutenant James Broom and Corporal Dixon, were dead, and twenty, including Sergeants Twin and Harris, wounded; so that there were left but one corporal and nine men, several of whom had been knocked down and bruised, though they were later reported unwounded. There was thus hardly any resistance, Captain Broke stopping his men for a moment until they were joined by the rest of the boarders under Lieutenants George

Thomas L. Watt and Charles Leslie Falkiner. The *Chesapeake's* mizen-top men began firing at the boarders, mortally wounding Midshipman John Samwell, and killing Lieutenant Watt; but one of the *Shannon's* long 9's was pointed at the top and cleared it out, being assisted by the British main-top men under Midshipman Cosnahan. At the same time the men in the *Chesapeake's* main-top were driven out of it by the fire of the *Shannon's* fore-top men under Midshipman William Smith (5).

The Americans on the main-deck now for the first time learned that the British had boarded, as the upper-deck men came crowding down; and Lieutenant George Budd sprang up, calling on his people to follow him. A dozen veterans tumbled up after him, and, as they reached the spar-deck, Budd led them against the British who were coming along the gangways. For a moment, under the surprise of the attack, the assailants paused, the British purser, Mr. George Aldham, and Captain's Clerk, Mr. John Dunn, being killed; but they rallied at once, and the handful of Americans were cut down or dispersed, Lieutenant Budd being wounded and knocked down the main hatchway. "The enemy," wrote Captain Broke, "fought desperately, but in disorder." Lieutenant Ludlow, already mortally wounded, heard the shouts and the stamping overhead, and he struggled up on deck, sword in hand. Two or three men followed him; but the rush of the boarders swept them away like

chaff, and the dying Ludlow was hewn down as he fought. On the forecastle a few seamen and marines turned at bay. Captain Broke was still leading his men with the same brilliant personal courage which he had all along shown. Attacking the first American, who was armed with a pike, he parried a blow from it and cut down the man; attacking another, he was himself cut down, and only saved by the seaman Mindham, already mentioned, who slew his assailant. One of the American marines brained an Englishman with his clubbed musket; and so stubborn was the resistance of the little group, that, for a moment, the assailants recoiled; but immediately afterwards they closed in and slew their foes to a man. The British fired a volley or two down the hatchway, in response to a couple of shots fired up, whereupon all resistance came to an end; and at 6.5, just fifteen minutes after the first gun had been fired, and not five minutes after Captain Broke had boarded, the colours of the *Chesapeake* were struck. Of her crew sixty-one were killed or mortally wounded, including her captain, her first and fourth lieutenants, the lieutenant of marines, the master, boatswain, and three midshipmen; and eighty-five were severely or slightly wounded, including both her other lieutenants, five midshipmen, and the chaplain: a total of one hundred and forty-eight. Of the *Shannon's* men, thirty-three were killed outright or died of their wounds, including her first Lieutenant, George Thomas L. Watt;

Purser George Aldham; Captain's Clerk John Dunn; and Midshipman John Samwell; and fifty were wounded, including the Captain himself and the Boatswain, Mr. William Stevens: total, eighty-three. The *Chesapeake* was taken into Halifax, where Captain Lawrence and Lieutenant Ludlow were both buried with military honours. Captain Broke was made a baronet, very deservedly, and Lieutenants Wallis[1] and Falkiner[2] were both made commanders.

The battle had been as bloody as it was brief. When the *Chesapeake* surrendered, her crew had suffered a much heavier relative loss than the crews of the *Guerrière*, the *Macedonian*, or even the *Java*. The *Shannon* had not only suffered a heavier loss than befell the victorious ship in any other single ship duel of the war, but had also suffered a loss as severe as that which had been held to justify the surrender of more than one vessel — the *Argus* and the *Épervier*, for instance, and even the *Guerrière*. The action was fought at such close quarters and under such conditions that there was no room for manœuvring, and, so far as the first broadside was

[1] Provo William Parry Wallis: born, 1791; Lieutenant, 1808; Commander, 1813; Captain, 1819; Rear-Admiral, 1851; Vice-Admiral, 1857; Admiral, 1863; Admiral of the Fleet, 1877; died senior of that rank, and G.C.B., February 13th, 1892, being in his hundred and first year. (Life by Bright.) — W. L. C.

[2] Charles Leslie Falkiner: born, 1791; Lieutenant, 1810; Commander, 1813; retired with the rank of Captain, 1848; succeeded his brother as a Baronet; died, 1858. — W. L. C.

concerned, no room for display of any very great difference in gunnery, provided each side was moderately efficient. Beyond question, Broke's men were far more skilful in the handling of the guns; but this was only one of the factors which went to make up the victory. It was a terrific, punishing fight, entered into on conditions that ensured the taking as well as the giving of very hard blows. Such a fight is not merely a test of pluck: it is a test, above all others, of training and discipline, and of cool-headed readiness to repair injuries and take advantage of shifting opportunities. The heavy loss on board the *Shannon* did not confuse or terrify the thoroughly trained men, disciplined to place implicit reliance in their leaders. A somewhat greater loss on board the *Chesapeake* disheartened the raw hands among the crew, and created such confusion that there was no immediate readiness to remedy any temporary disaster; while even the officers, being new to one another and to the ship, and some of them being very young, were not able to do their best. American writers have been fond of saying that the defeat of the *Chesapeake* was due to accident, especially to the loss of the jib-sheet and foretop-sail tie, which brought her up into the wind, and exposed her to a raking fire. This statement is simply not true. Such accidents are bound to occur in battle; and a skilled captain and crew will remedy them when they occur in their own ship, and will take advantage of them when they

occur to the enemy. The victory was not in the slightest degree to be attributed to accident,[1] though it may have been slightly hastened by it. Trained skill and good discipline won, as they had so often won before. There was no lack of courage on the defeated side; the heavy death-roll shows that. Nearly every American officer was killed or wounded, and so were three-fourths of the marines, and half the veterans of the crew.

Nor did the boarding win the victory. When the ships came together the *Chesapeake* was already beaten at the guns. She had been struck, all told, by three hundred and sixty-two shot of every description, and the *Shannon*, by about one hundred and fifty-eight. Had the ships not come together, the fight would have been longer, and the loss greater and more nearly equal; but the result would have been the same. The *Chesapeake's* crew had been together and on board her only as many hours as the *Shannon's* had been years, and the result was what might have been foreseen, when the captain of the *Shannon* had spent his time to such good advantage in training his crew. It is worth noticing that the only thoroughly disciplined set of men on board the *Chesapeake*, the marines, behaved with superb courage and fought to the last, very few of them escaping entirely unscathed. Complaint was made at the time against the Portuguese and other

[1] Cooper is of little use for this action; and the "accident" theory is a favourite with most American writers.

foreigners among the crew, and notably against the Portuguese boatswain's mate. It appears that at the time of the boarding they did not do very well, the boatswain's mate in particular showing cowardice; but it is idle to ascribe the defeat in any way to their action. The *Chesapeake* was beaten before the boarding took place; and her men had suffered too severe a loss, and were too demoralised, to oppose successful resistance to gallant Captain Broke and his veterans.

Admiral de La Gravière comments on this fight as follows, and his criticism is entirely just: —

"It is impossible to avoid seeing in the capture of the *Chesapeake* a new proof of the enormous power of a good organisation, when it has received the consecration of a few years' actual service on the sea. On this occasion, in effect, two captains equally renowned, the honour of two navies, were opposed to each other, in two ships of the same tonnage and number of guns. Never had the chances seemed better balanced; but Sir Philip Broke had commanded the *Shannon* for nearly seven years, while Captain Lawrence had only commanded the *Chesapeake* for a few days. The first of these frigates had cruised for eighteen months on the coast of America; the second was leaving port. One had a crew long accustomed to habits of strict obedience; the other was manned by men who had just been engaged in mutiny. The Americans were wrong to accuse fortune on this occasion. Fortune was not fickle—she was merely logical. The *Shannon* captured the *Chesapeake* on the first of June, 1813; but on the 14th of September, 1806, the day when he took command of his

frigate, Captain Broke had begun to prepare the glorious termination of this bloody affair."[1]

No single ship action of the war attracted greater attention than this, and none reflected greater credit on the victor. After five ships in succession had been captured in single fight by the enemy, without one victory to relieve the defeats, Captain Broke, in sight of the enemy's coast, off the harbour of one of his chief seaports, had captured single-handed a frigate nominally of equal, and in reality of slightly superior, force. He himself was very badly wounded, and was never again able to go into active service.[2] His victory was celebrated with almost extravagant joy throughout Britain. The exultation of the British was as great as had been their previous depression. No other British captain has ever won such honour by a single ship action. No other fight between frigates has ever been so enthusiastically commemorated by the victor's countrymen. Captain Broke was made a baronet. Nelson, for the battle of the Nile, was only raised to the lowest rank of the peerage; and fifty years later, as we learn from "Tom Brown at Rugby," the glory of the *Shannon* and her commander was a favourite theme for song among British schoolboys.

In America the news of the result caused wide-

[1] 'Guerres Maritimes,' ii. 272.

[2] Philip Bowes Vere Broke: born, 1776; Lieutenant, 1795; Commander, 1799; Captain, 1801; Baronet, November 2nd, 1813; K.C.B., January 2nd, 1815; Rear-Admiral, 1830; died, 1841.—W. L. C.

spread grief and dismay. A year had made the Americans feel the same unjustifiable self-confidence that the British had felt at the outbreak of the war, and the *Shannon's* victory shattered the one as the frigate and sloop actions of 1812 had shattered the other. In each case the exultation of the victors was an unconscious expression of the high esteem in which they had held the prowess of the vanquished. The excitement caused by the capture of the *Guerrière* was proof of the commanding position of the British Navy; the joy over the capture of the *Chesapeake* showed the point to which the prowess of the Americans had raised the general estimate of American ships-of-war.

The lesson of the *Chesapeake* was not to stand alone. The American brig sloop *Argus*, 16, commanded by Lieutenant William Henry Allen, had crossed the ocean in June, carrying the American minister to France. On July 14th, 1813, she put out again from Lorient, and cruised in the chops of the English Channel, and then along the coast of Cornwall and into St. George's Channel. She captured and burnt ship after ship, creating the greatest consternation among the merchants. The labour was very severe, the men getting hardly any rest. On the night of August 13th a brig laden with wine from Oporto was taken, and many of the crew got drunk. At five o'clock on the following morning, a large brig-of-war, which proved to be the British brig sloop *Pelican*, under Commander John Fordyce

Maples,[1] was descried standing down under a cloud of canvas. St. David's Head bore east five leagues.

The *Argus* was a very swift brig, with loftier masts and longer spars than the *Pelican*, though the latter was considerably heavier; and she was armed only with 24-pr. carronades as against the 32's of the *Pelican*. The odds against her were about the same as they had been against the *Peacock* or the *Java;* but Allen, who had been Decatur's first lieutenant when the *Macedonian* was captured, was as confident of victory as Lawrence had been, and he had no intention of taking advantage of his superiority of speed to avoid combat. The *Argus* shortened sail and waited until the *Pelican* was nearly aft, and but a pistol-shot off. Then, at 6 A.M., she wore and fired her port guns, the *Pelican* responding with her starboard battery.[2] Immediately after the beginning of the action a round shot carried off Allen's leg, inflicting a mortal wound; but he stayed on deck until he fainted from loss of blood. Soon afterwards the first lieutenant, William Henry Watson, was wounded by a grape-shot and carried below; and the second lieutenant, Mr. U. H. Allen, was left to fight the brig. The firing was very

[1] The *Pelican* had anchored at Cork on August 12th, after a cruise, and had at once been ordered to sea again in quest of the *Argus*. She had, therefore, taken necessary stores on board, and sailed within fourteen hours. — W. L. C.

[2] Minutes of court of inquiry into loss of *Argus*, March, 1815.

heavy, especially from the *Pelican;* but most of it went high, on both sides. At 6.14 Commander Maples bore up to pass astern of his antagonist; but Lieutenant Allen luffed into the wind and threw the maintop-sail aback, so as to come square across his antagonist's bows. From this position he raked the *Pelican* with his broadside; but the guns were badly aimed, and did little damage. The ships again ran off side by side, the fire continuing as furiously as ever; but the *Argus* began to suffer so much in her rigging that she became unmanageable, and fell off before the wind. The *Pelican* then passed under her stern, raked her heavily, ranged up on her starboard quarter, and raked her again and again; for it was no longer possible to handle her. The *Argus* suffered heavily aloft: her crew escaped without severe slaughter, but began to show symptoms of demoralisation, not behaving as well as the gallantry and seamanship of her officers would seemingly have warranted. In a few moments the *Pelican* passed her foes' broadside, and took a position on her starboard bow. At 6.45, three-quarters of an hour after the action had begun, the brigs fell together, and the *Argus* struck just as the British were about to board.[1]

The *Pelican* carried twenty-one guns, including sixteen 32-pound carronades, four long 6's, and one 12-pound carronade. The *Argus* carried twenty guns — eighteen 24-pound carronades and two long

[1] Letter of Maples, Aug. 14th, 1813.

12's.[1] The crew of the *Pelican* consisted of 113 men, the crew of the *Argus* of 104. Seven men were killed and wounded in the *Pelican*, among the killed being Master's Mate William Young, and twenty-four in the *Argus*. Both ships were tolerably well cut up. The difference in force was less than as five to four; whereas the difference in loss was greater than three to one. In other words, the *Pelican* displayed superiority in efficiency as well as superiority in weight. The *Argus* made a distinctly poor fight. She did not inflict much damage, and though the officers behaved well, most of them being killed or wounded, the crew had lost less than a fourth of their number when they surrendered. The *Pelican* herself did not show to much advantage, her gunnery being poor. In short, the action was directly the reverse of that between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon*. Broke won because he did even better than his gallant and skilful antagonist; but the *Pelican* won, although she did poorly, because

[1] James gives the armament of the two brigs thus: —

Pelican.	*Argus.*
16 32-pr. carrs.	18 24-pr. carrs.
2 long 6-prs.	2 long British 12-prs.[2]
1 12-pr. boat carr.*	
2 brass 6-prs.†	
Broadside weight of metal, 262 lbs.	Broadside weight of metal, 228 lbs.

* Not reckoned as part of the broadside. The 6-prs. were in the stern ports, where they inconvenienced the man at the helm.

† The 12-prs. were in her bridle ports, and not in her broadside.

— W. L. C.

her antagonist did very badly indeed. The shortcomings of the *Argus* have never been adequately explained, for her commander was a man of proved courage and ability. It was afterwards stated that her powder was poor, and that her crew were overtired, and some of them intoxicated.[1] It seems evident that Lieutenant Allen had become overconfident, and had let his men fall off in their gunnery, and yet had engaged a heavier antagonist when his people were worn out with fatigue.[2]

The next engagement was in favour of the Americans. The only one of the small American gunbrigs left was the *Enterprise*, Lieutenant William Burrows. Two bow-chasers had been crowded into her bridle-ports, and she was over-manned, mounting fourteen 18-pr. carronades and two long 9's, with a crew of 120 men. She was a very lucky little vessel, both before and after the engagement now to be told, and, though a dull sailer, of weak force, she managed to escape capture, and in her turn captured a number of British privateers. One of these privateers, mounting fourteen long 9's with a crew of seventy-nine men, showed fight, and only struck after receiving a broadside which killed and wounded four of her crew. Later, being chased by

[1] Cooper ; and minutes of court of inquiry.

[2] Lieutenant W. H. Allen, of the *Argus*, after having his thigh amputated, died at Plymouth on August 18th, and was buried there on the 21st. Commander Maples was posted on August 23rd, as a reward for his success. He died, after retirement with the rank of Rear-Admiral, in 1847. — W. L. C.

a frigate, the *Enterprise* had to throw overboard all her guns but two in order to escape.

In the summer of 1813 she was kept cruising off the eastern coast to harass the Nova Scotian and New Brunswick privateers. On September 5th, while standing along shore near Penguin Point, a few miles to the eastward of Portland, Maine, she descried at anchor inside, the British gun-brig *Boxer*, Commander Samuel Blyth, of about her own size, but with two carronades less,[1] and only sixty-six men in crew. The *Boxer* at once hoisted ensigns, fore and aft, and bore up for the *Enterprise*, which was then standing in on the starboard tack; but, when the two brigs were still four miles apart, it fell calm.[2] At midday a breeze sprang up from the south-west, giving the *Enterprise* the weather-gage; and she manœuvred for some time before closing, in order to try the comparative rates of sailing of the vessels. At 3 P.M. Lieutenant Burrows hoisted three ensigns, shortened sail, and edged away towards the *Boxer*. Commander Blyth had nailed his colours to the mast, telling his men that they should never be struck while he had life in his body;[3] and his little brig was steered gallantly into action. Both crews were in good spirits, and they cheered loudly as the brigs neared one another. At a quarter-past three, when

[1] The *Boxer*, moreover, had two long 6's, instead of long 9-prs. — W. L. C.

[2] Letter of Lieutenant Edward R. M'Call, U. S. N., Sept. 5th, 1813.

[3] 'Naval Chronicle,' xxxii. 462.

the two brigs were on the starboard tack not a half pistol-shot apart, they opened fire, the Americans using the port, and the British the starboard guns. Both broadsides were very destructive, and the two commanders fell at the very beginning of the action. Commander Blyth was killed by an 18-pound shot, which passed through his body while he was standing on the quarter-deck. The second in command, Lieutenant David M'Creery, continued to fight the brig. At almost the same time Lieutenant Burrows fell. He had laid hold of a gun-tackle fall to help the crew of a carronade to run out the gun. In doing so he raised one leg against the bulwark, and a canister-shot struck his thigh, glancing into his body and inflicting a fearful wound.[1] In spite of the pain, he refused to be carried below, and lay on the deck calling out to the men, and cheering them to the fight. Lieutenant Edward R. M'Call took command in his place. After a quarter of an hour's yardarm and yardarm work, the *Enterprise* ranged ahead, rounded to on the starboard tack, and raked the *Boxer*. She shot away the *Boxer's* maintopmast and topsail-yard; but the British crew kept up the fight bravely, with the exception of four men, who deserted their quarters and were afterwards court-martialled for cowardice. However, there was now no chance of success. The *Enterprise* set her foresail, so as to keep on the starboard bow of the *Boxer*, and raked her until she surrendered, half an hour after

[1] Cooper, ii. 259.

the fight began, she being then entirely unmanageable and defenceless. Lieutenant Burrows would not go below until he had received the sword of his adversary, when he exclaimed, "I am satisfied; I die contented."

Both brigs had suffered severely, especially the *Boxer*, which had been hulled repeatedly. The *Enterprise's* injuries were chiefly aloft. The difference in loss of men was less than the difference in damage to the brigs. Twelve of the Americans and twenty-one of the British were killed or wounded. The British court-martial attributed the defeat of the *Boxer* "to a superiority in the enemy's force, principally in the number of men, as well as to a greater degree of skill in the direction of her fire, and to the destructive effects of the first broadsides."[1] The main factor was the superiority in force, the difference in loss being very nearly proportional to it. Both sides fought with equal bravery; and the difference in skill, though appreciable, was not marked. At a naval dinner given at New York shortly afterwards, one of the toasts offered was, "The crew of the *Boxer;* enemies by law, but by gallantry brothers." The two commanders were both buried at Portland with all the honours of war.[2]

[1] Minutes of court-martial on board H. M. S. *Surprise*, Jan. 8th. 1814.

[2] Commander Samuel Blyth, born in 1783, had held his rank since September 5th, 1811. If my memory of the spot serves me aright, a single tree overshadows the graves of both commanders. — W. L. C.

The fight had taken place so close to the shore that it could be both seen and heard. Among those who listened to the guns was Longfellow, who long afterwards commemorated the battle in verse. Commander Blyth was a man of high personal courage, noted for his gentleness and courtesy. He had been one of Captain Lawrence's pall-bearers, and, shortly before his death, had been publicly thanked by the militia commander of one of the Maine districts for the kindness and humanity which he had shown to the inhabitants.

The blockade of the American coast as a whole was far more important than any of the single ship actions; but the incidents to relieve the monotony were so few that there is little to chronicle beyond the fact of the blockade itself, and the further fact that it told upon every article which any American bought or sold, and that it put every man to such trouble and inconvenience, if not to such positive want, as to cause formidable discontent. It was the mere presence of the ships that accomplished this—their ceaseless standing to and fro off the coast and at the mouths of the harbours. American merchant vessels had been almost driven from the ocean, although many ran in and out of the New England ports, until, within the closing months of the war, the blockade was applied to New England also in all its rigour. On the high seas the British took many American ships; but they were mostly privateers, or the prizes of privateers, for there were

not many merchantmen to capture. No vigilance by the blockading squadrons could prevent many cruisers, public and private, built especially to run and to fight, from slipping out of port; and, of the prizes, enough got in to pay well in a certain proportion of cases; but mere cargo ships had to undergo such risks that they could only be compensated for by trebling and quadrupling the prices of the cargoes. The weary sameness of the blockade was broken by occasional descents to harry the coast, or by cutting-out expeditions against gunboats and privateers. Of course, these were mere incidents, valuable chiefly as relieving the monotony of the life, though, in the case of the descents, they had a certain effect in harassing and worrying the Americans. Even the damage done by these expeditions, however, probably caused as much anger as willingness to come to terms. It was the constant pressure of the blockade itself that counted, together with the opportunities which it offered for descents in force, rather than the mere harrying expeditions.

It was early in April, 1813, when Rear-Admiral George Cockburn first began to harry the shores of the Chesapeake in earnest. His little flotilla was manned by but four or five hundred men; yet he stationed himself at the mouth of the Susquehanna and supplied the whole British fleet with provisions from American towns and farms; and no effort worth speaking of was made to molest him. All Maryland was fiercely excited and angered; but

Maryland had to learn the lesson that, after war has begun, it is impossible to do much by improvised means of defence against a trained enemy who can choose his own point of attack. The militia here and there gathered for resistance; but Cockburn's veterans, sailors and soldiers, dispersed them with the utmost ease. He destroyed a large cannon foundry, he burned all the towns where there was any resistance, and, early in May, he brought back his flotilla to Sir John Borlase Warren, having had but one man wounded during the month which he had spent working his will among the Marylanders. The American newspapers denounced him bitterly as a buccaneer; but they should have denounced even more severely themselves and their political leaders. It was a bitter disgrace to the American people that they should be powerless to resent or repel such insults to their shores; and it was a severe commentary on their folly in having refused in the past, and even at the time refusing, to organise the thoroughly trained forces by sea and land which alone could prevent or avenge such a catastrophe.

This expedition showed that the villages and country districts were completely at the mercy of the British. There were three towns of importance, Baltimore, Washington, and Norfolk, which were also within striking distance of the fleet; and, in June, Warren made up his mind to attack one of these. He chose Norfolk, because there was the

Portsmouth Navy Yard, and there lay the *Constellation* frigate. The expedition, however, miscarried, although the Admiral had at his disposal three thousand troops and thirteen war vessels. The land forces became entangled among some deep creeks, and re-embarked without making any serious effort to carry out their part of the programme. The attack by the Navy was made in a division of fifteen boats with seven hundred men, under the command of Captain Samuel John Pechell of the *San Domingo*, 74. Captain John Martin Hanchett, of the *Diadem* frigate, led the way in his launch. The point chosen for attack was Craney Island, where a battery of six 18-prs. had been erected and put in charge of a hundred sailors and fifty marines from the *Constellation*, under Lieutenants Neale, Shubrick, Saunders, and Breckinbridge of that ship.[1] The water was shallow, and the attack was not pushed with the resolution ordinarily displayed by the British Navy in an enterprise of the kind. The *Constellation's* men reserved their fire until the British were close in, when they opened with destructive effect. While still more than seventy yards from the guns, the *Diadem's* launch grounded. Three of the boats were sunk by shot, but remained above water, as it was so shallow; and, in the heat of the fight, some of the *Constellation's* crew, headed by Midshipman Tatnall, waded out and took possession.[2] Some

[1] Letter of Captain John Cassin, June 23rd, 1813.

[2] 'Life of Commodore Josiah Tatnall,' by Charles C. Jones, p. 17.

of the crews surrendered and went ashore with their captors; the others escaped to the remaining boats, which immediately afterwards made off in disorder, having lost ninety-one men.[1] The assailants afterwards strove to justify themselves by asserting that the bottom was covered with slime and mud too deep to admit of their getting on shore; but this was certainly not the case, as it did not prevent Tatnall and his companions from wading out to them, and from returning in safety with the prisoners. The Americans suffered no loss.

This took place on June 22nd, 1813. Smarting under the repulse, Warren, on the 25th, sent Cockburn, accompanied by a land force under Major-General Sir Sydney Beckwith, to attack Hampton village. The militia on that occasion gave Beckwith a rather stout fight, killing and wounding some fifty men before they were dispersed. The town was then taken and destroyed with circumstances of horrible outrage. Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Napier, of the 102nd Regiment, commanded Beckwith's advance, and prevented his men from joining in the deeds of the "miscreants," as he called them. He wrote, with intense indignation, that the troops perpetrated with impunity "every horror — rape, murder, pillage — and not a man was punished;" and he blamed Sir Sydney for not hanging several of the villains.[2] Nothing was done, however; and

[1] James, vi. 233 [ed. 1837].

[2] 'Life of General Sir Charles James Napier,' i. 221, 225.

the affair caused bitter anger in America, leading to reprisals and counter-reprisals on the Canadian frontier. Although none of the offenders were punished, both Sir John Warren and General Beckwith took steps to prevent any repetition of the outrages, dismissing from the service a regiment of French deserters in British pay, who were alleged to be the chief offenders.[1] During the remainder of the year Warren cruised off Chesapeake Bay and at the mouth of the lower Potomac, keeping Virginia and Maryland in a state of incessant alarm; which makes it all the more wonderful that those States were not roused to take measures for efficient defence. Cockburn sailed south to harry the coast of the Carolinas and Georgia. Colonel Napier went with him to North Carolina to take part in the descents, and left on record his distaste for what he called "a necessary part of our job, viz., plundering and ruining the peasantry . . . (for) no outrages have been authorised on persons, though much on property, unavoidably."

[1] James (vi. 234, ed. 1837), while admitting that outrages were committed, makes a feeble attempt to minimise them by quoting from the Georgetown *Federal Republican*, of July 7th, 1813, the following: "The statement of the women of Hampton being violated by the British turns out to be false. A correspondence upon that subject, and the pillage said to have been committed there, has taken place between General Taylor and Admiral Warren. Some plunder appears to have been committed, but it was confined to the French troops employed." If the outrages were perpetrated by troops in British pay, Britain was, unhappily, responsible for what occurred; and Napier's testimony puts the question of outrage beyond challenge. — W. L. C.

Meanwhile the American gunboats had on one or two occasions made efforts to harass the British blockading squadrons, with ludicrously futile results. The gunboats were sloop or schooner-rigged, and armed with one or two long heavy guns, and occasionally with light carronades to repel boarders. The larger gunboats were useful in convoying parties of small coasting vessels from one port to another; and they interfered with the British boats and tenders, and also kept privateers off the coast. The smaller gunboats, which were chiefly employed in attacks on the frigates, had been built in accordance with Jefferson's theory of coast protection, and they proved utterly worthless. They trusted mainly to their sweeps for motive power, and each was usually armed with a long 12 or 18-pounder. They could be used only in an almost absolute calm, for in any wind it was not only impossible to fire, but also difficult to keep the boats right side up. Both officers and men hated the gunboat service, and were so convinced of the uselessness of the vessels that they made but half-hearted attempts to do anything with them. The gunboats were much smaller and in every way inferior to the big Danish gunboats, which, during the same period, did at times efficient work on the coast of Denmark. That the fault lay in the boats themselves, and not in the crews who manned them, was proved by the great gallantry with which the latter afterwards behaved at Bladensburg.

On June 20th fifteen gunboats attacked the *Junon*, 38, Captain James Sanders, while she lay becalmed in Hampton road. The gunboats anchored while still at a very long range, and promptly drifted round, so that they could not shoot. They then got under way, and gradually drew nearer the *Junon*. A long-range cannonade followed, in which the *Junon* was very slightly injured, and the gunboats suffered not at all; but as soon as a slight breeze sprung up, the *Barrosa*, 36, Captain William Henry Shirreff, approached, and promptly drove off the flotilla; for as soon as they felt the effects of the breeze the gunboats became useless, and could only retire. The only loss they suffered was one man killed and two wounded, from the *Barrosa's* fire.

On that occasion the *Junon* did little better than the gunboats; but she had her revenge a month later. On July 29th she was in Delaware Bay with the ship-sloop *Martin*, 18, Commander Humphrey Fleming Senhouse, when the latter grounded on the outside of Crow's Shoal. The frigate anchored within supporting distance; and shortly afterwards the two ships were attacked by a flotilla of ten American gunboats. Besides the usual disadvantages of gunboats, these particular ones suffered under an additional handicap, for their powder was so bad that all of the officers had joined in a solemn protest to the Navy Department, and had stated

that it was unfit for service.[1] The flotilla kept at a distance which permitted an hour's cannonading with no damage to anybody, their own shot failing to reach even the brig, while those of the frigate occasionally passed over them. During the firing, gunboat No. 121, Sailing-Master Shead, drifted a mile and a half away from her consorts. This gave the British an opportunity, of which they took prompt advantage. They made a dash for No. 121 in seven boats, containing one hundred and forty men, under the command of Lieutenant Philip Westphal. Mr. Shead anchored, and made an obstinate defence; but at the second discharge of his long-gun the carriage was almost torn to pieces, and he was reduced to the use of small-arms.[2] The British boats advanced steadily, firing their boat carronades and musketry, and carried the gunboat by boarding, though not without a loss of three killed or mortally wounded, and four wounded, while seven of the twenty-five members of the gunboat's crew suffered likewise.

At about the same time the boats of the British brig-sloops *Contest* and *Mohawk*, under the command of Lieutenant Rodger Carley Curry, made an attack on the little gunboat *Asp*, 3, commanded by Midshipman Sigourney, when she was moored in

[1] Navy Department MSS., 'Masters Commandants' Letters,' 1813, No. 3; enclosed in letter of Master-Commandant Samuel Angus.

[2] Letter of Mr. Shead, Aug. 5th, 1813.

Yeocomico Creek, out of the Chesapeake, on July 11th. After a murderous conflict, in which eleven Americans, including Mr. Sigourney, and eight British, including Lieutenant Curry, were killed or wounded, the British carried the *Asp* and set her on fire. However, the surviving Americans, nine in number, escaped to the shore, rallied under Midshipman McClintock, and, as soon as the British retired, boarded the *Asp*, put out the flames, and got her into fighting order.[1] They were not again molested.

Shortly before this, on June 12th, the boats of the British frigate *Narcissus*, 32, Captain John Richard Lumley, containing fifty men under the command of Lieutenant John Cririe, captured the little cutter *Surveyor*, 6, under Mr. William S. Travis, with a crew of fifteen men, as she lay in York River, out of the Chesapeake.[2] The struggle was brief but bloody, five Americans and nine British being killed or wounded. Lieutenant Cririe led his men with distinguished gallantry, and proved himself a generous victor, for he returned Mr. Travis's sword with a letter running: "Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number on the night of the 12th instant, excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed

[1] Letter of Midshipman McClintock, July 15th, 1813; also James, vi. 236 (ed. 1837).

[2] Letter of W. S. Travis, June 16th, 1813.

. . . and I am at a loss which to admire most — the previous arrangements on board the *Surveyor*, or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed inch by inch."

In January, 1814, the little United States coasting schooner *Alligator*, of four guns and forty men, Sailing-Master R. Bassett, was attacked by the boats of a British frigate and brig, after nightfall, while lying at anchor in the mouth of the Stone River, South Carolina. Two of her men were killed and two wounded; but the boats were beaten off with severe loss, one of them being captured.[1]

Besides these engagements with the United States' armed vessels, boat-parties from the British two-deckers and frigates destroyed many privateers and merchantmen all along the coast from New England to Georgia, as well as on the high seas. Some of the privateers showed fight; and of them some behaved with courage that would have done credit to any ship in the regular navy, while others betrayed panic or inefficiency which would have disgraced the worst ship in the worst regular navy afloat. In short, they were the militia of the sea, and they could not be depended upon for steady fighting, though at times their feats were brilliant to a degree; for, unlike the militia of the land, they were trained to the profession of arms, and they followed by choice a pursuit of peril and hazard.

[1] Letters of Bassett, Jan. 31st, 1814, and Commander J. H. Dent, Feb. 21st, 1814.

A good example of the wide variety in behaviour of the privateers under similar circumstances was afforded by two incidents which occurred in Chesapeake Bay early in 1813. On February 8th, nine boats, with two hundred men under the command of Lieutenant Kelly Nazer, from the four British frigates, *Belvidera*, *Maidstone*, *Junon*, and *Statira*, were sent against the schooner *Lottery*, John Southcomb, master, a letter of marque of six 12-pr. carronades, and twenty-five men, bound from Baltimore to Bordeaux. A calm came on, enabling the boats to overtake the schooner; and they spread out, then closing in with a rush. The schooner[1] was speedily carried, but only after an obstinate struggle, in which Southcomb and nineteen of his crew, together with six of the assailants, were killed or wounded. Southcomb, mortally wounded, was taken on board the *Belvidera*, where Captain Richard Byron (2) treated him with the kind and considerate courtesy which always marked that brave officer's dealings with his foes; and, when Southcomb died, his body was sent ashore with every mark of respect due to a brave officer. Captain Stewart, of the *Constellation*, wrote Captain Byron a letter thanking him for his generous conduct.[2]

On March 16th, 1813, a smaller British division

[1] The *Lottery* was added to the Royal Navy as the *Canso*, 16. — W. L. C.

[2] The whole correspondence is given in full in 'Niles's Register,' February and March numbers.

of five boats and one hundred and five men, commanded by Lieutenant James Polkinghorne, attacked the privateer schooner *Dolphin*, and the letters of marque *Racer*, *Arab*, and *Lynx*, mounting all told thirty guns, with an aggregate of one hundred and sixty men. Polkinghorne's force was greatly inferior: nevertheless it dashed in with the utmost gallantry, and the privateersmen speedily became panic-stricken. The *Arab* and *Lynx* surrendered at once. The *Racer* was carried, after a sharp struggle in which Polkinghorne was wounded; and her guns were turned on the *Dolphin*. Most of the latter's crew jumped overboard. A few rallied round their captain, but they were at once scattered as the British seamen came on board.[1] It was an unusually brilliant and daring cutting-out expedition.[2]

The American gunboats occasionally captured British privateers, and on more than one occasion cut them out, when they were becalmed or at anchor, with boat-parties; but they did nothing of any especial note in that way. They also at

[1] See Niles for this; also James's 'Naval Occurrences.'

[2] In this affair, besides Lieutenant Polkinghorne, Lieutenant William Alexander Brand, Lieutenant William Richard Flint, R.M., Midshipman John Sleigh, and 7 men were wounded. In spite of its gallant nature, no medal was ever granted for it. The Americans lost 16 killed and wounded. The *Racer* became the *Shelburne*, 14, and the *Lynx*, the *Musquedobet*, 14, in the Royal Navy. Polkinghorne was not made a Commander until June 27th, 1814. He was posted on August 25th, 1828, and died on January 9th, 1839. — W. L. C.

times cut off tenders to the British war vessels, or interfered with the British cutting-out expeditions.

In the spring of 1814 the command of the British fleet on the coast of North America was given to Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Forester Inglis Cochrane.[1] The main British force continued to lie in the Chesapeake.

During 1813 and 1814 the blockade of the American coast was so severe that only occasionally could American frigates get to sea; and those that did get to sea failed to accomplish anything. Once or twice one of the American 44's chased a British 18-pounder frigate and failed to come up with her; and once or twice they were themselves chased by a couple of 18-pounder frigates and escaped. They captured a few merchantmen and picked up one or two small British cruisers, while two or three small American cruisers, brigs, or schooners were lost in the same way; but nothing of importance happened to any American frigates, with one exception.

That exception was the *Essex*, 32, Captain David Porter, which spent most of the year 1813 in the Pacific. The *Essex* had left the United States on October 28th, 1812. As she expected to make a very long cruise, she carried an unusual quantity of provisions, and sixty more men than ordinarily, so as to man any ships which she might capture. She

[1] Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, whom Cochrane superseded, was only sixty-one years of age, but was very infirm. Cochrane was but fifty-six. — W. L. C.

cruised in the South Atlantic for two or three months, capturing some valuable prizes. Porter then decided on the very bold course of doubling Cape Horn, and striking at the British whalers in the Pacific.

This was practically going into the enemy's waters, for there were no stations where the *Essex* could refit in safety, while South America and South-Eastern Asia were full of ports friendly to the British. No American frigate had ever before gone into the Pacific; and during all the long European warfare, no one of Great Britain's enemies had ventured to attack her in the remote South Seas.

At the end of the winter the *Essex* doubled the Horn, and sailed into the harbour of Valparaiso. On March 20th she captured a Peruvian corsair, the *Nereyda*, which had been harassing American whalers. Porter threw her guns and small-arms overboard, and sent her into port. The Spanish colonies were at that time in open revolt against Spain, both sides bidding for the favour of Britain; and there was lawlessness throughout the South Seas. The American whalers had been in great danger of capture, but Porter's appearance saved them. He cruised hither and thither to the different islands and archipelagoes most frequented by whaling vessels; and, as by-play, he took part in the wars of the savages. He saved all the American whalers, and did not cost the government a dollar, supplying

everything from his prizes — sails, guns, anchors, provisions, medicine, and even money to pay the officers and the men. He completely broke up the British whaling trade in the Pacific, capturing or destroying four thousand tons of shipping, and making prisoners of four hundred men. One or two of the prizes he turned into tenders; and these and the boat-parties had one or two smart skirmishes in capturing such of the whalers as were armed letters of marque.[1]

Early in January, 1814, he returned to the South American coast, and again made the harbour of Valparaiso. One of the captured whalers, rechristened the *Essex Junior*,[2] was in company as a tender. On February 8th the British frigate *Phœbe*, 36, Captain James Hillyar, accompanied by the ship-sloop *Cherub*, 18, Commander Thomas Tudor Tucker, made their appearance in the harbour. They had been sent to the Pacific especially to capture Porter, to break up the American whaling trade, and to destroy the American fur-stations at the mouth of the Columbia. When they came into the harbour Porter was afraid that they might try to carry the *Essex* out of hand without regard to the neutrality laws. The *Essex* was put in fighting trim. The *Phœbe* came so near her — whether by accident, as Hillyar asserted, or by design, as Porter insisted, cannot be said — that a collision seemed imminent;

[1] In Porter's own book this cruise is described at length.

[2] Previously the *Atlantic*. — W. L. C.

but neither captain was willing to begin the fray, and the peace of the port was not broken.

The British ships began a blockade of the port which lasted over a month. Porter was anxious to meet the *Phœbe* alone, and Hillyar was equally determined to use the advantage which his two ships gave him. He was quite right in refusing single combat except on his own terms. The *Phœbe* was armed like the *Essex* with forty-six guns; but on her main-deck she carried long 18's, so that at a distance she could cut the *Essex* to pieces without suffering any material loss or damage. Her crew consisted of over three hundred men, while that of the *Essex* numbered but two hundred and fifty-five. But, on the occasions when he sought a single combat, Porter took the crew of the *Essex Junior* on board, which gave him sixty men additional. In such circumstances the widely different armaments of the two frigates made it difficult to foretell the result of a combat between them. In ordinary circumstances, and taking into account the ordinary chances and vicissitudes of naval warfare, the *Phœbe's* armament was beyond all comparison the better; but the *Essex* was the swifter ship, and at close quarters her carronades threw, of course, a greater weight in broadside than the long-guns to which they were opposed, while, when she had the crew of the *Essex Junior* on board, the complements of the two ships were about equal, while the crew of the *Essex* had been especially trained with a view to

boarding. If his speed had enabled him to close, Porter would have had more than an even chance of winning; whereas he had no chance at all in action at a distance. Hillyar was not in the South Pacific as a naval knight-errant. His business there was to capture the *Essex*. It would have been folly to risk the result on a doubtful single ship duel, instead of utilising his superiority in force, and trying to get his antagonist at a disadvantage. The *Cherub* was a small frigate-built sloop, mounting twenty-six guns, with a crew of about 160 men. All her guns were carronades, excepting two long bow-chasers.

Toward the end of March, Porter decided to run out of harbour on the first opportunity, so as to draw away his two antagonists in chase, and let the *Essex Junior* escape; for Porter had satisfied himself that his ship was faster than either of the British ships. After he had come to this conclusion, the two vessels were kept always ready, the *Essex* having only her proper complement of 255 men on board.

On March 28th it came on to blow from the south, and the *Essex* parted her cables. She then got under way and made sail, Porter having determined to put his plan in operation. The British vessels were close in with the weathermost point of the bay, and Porter hauled up to pass to windward of them. Just as he was rounding the outermost point, and when safety was almost within his grasp, a heavy squall struck the *Essex*, and her main top-

mast went by the board. Porter then committed a grave error. David Glasgow Farragut,[1] then a midshipman, and afterwards the greatest admiral of the American navy, was on board the *Essex*; and in after life he always expressed the opinion that she should have run before the wind, which had shifted, and have tried to escape into the open sea; for Farragut believed that, even with her topmast out, she would have been faster before the wind than the *Phœbe*, and certainly much faster than the *Cherub*. This at least would have given her a chance to escape: otherwise she had no chance at all.[2]

However, the *Essex* tried to get back to the harbour, and failing, because of her crippled condition, she anchored, at 3.40 P.M., in a small bay three miles from Valparaiso, and half a mile from a detached Chilian battery. She was within pistol-shot of the shore, and was as much entitled to the benefit of neutral rights as when in Valparaiso harbour; but neutral rights have shifting values, and Hillyar had no idea of letting his foe escape when disabled and within his grasp.

The *Phœbe* and *Cherub* bore down upon the *Essex*, covered with ensigns, union jacks, and motto flags;

[1] David Glasgow Farragut, born in Tennessee, of part Spanish ancestry, July 5th, 1801; gained undying fame as a naval commander in the American Civil War, 1861–65, notably at New Orleans and in Mobile Bay; was the first officer to be given the rank of Admiral in the United States Navy; visited Europe, 1867–68; died in New York, August 14th, 1870. *Life* by L. Farragut, by Headley, and by Mahan. — W. L. C.

[2] 'Life of Farragut,' by his son, Loyall Farragut, pp. 37–46.

and the *Essex* made ready to receive them, her flags flying from every mast.[1] The fight was begun before the springs could be got on her cables. Hillyar made his attack with extreme caution, taking his frigate under the stern of the *Essex*, while the *Cherub* took her position on the American's starboard bow. The action began soon after four in the afternoon. The *Essex's* bow-chasers speedily drove off the *Cherub*, which ran down and stationed herself near the *Phœbe*. The latter opened with her broadside of long 18's from a position in which not one of Porter's guns could reach her. Three times springs were got on the cables of the *Essex*, in order to bring her round until her broadside bore; but in each instance they were shot away. Three long 12's were then got out of the stern-ports; and with these a brisk fire was kept up, aimed especially at the rigging of the British ships. A good many of the *Essex's* crew were killed during the first five minutes, before she could bring any guns to bear; but afterwards she did not suffer much. Meanwhile her own long 12's were so well handled that, after a quarter of an hour's firing, the *Phœbe* and *Cherub* were actually driven off. They wore, and again began with their long-guns, but found themselves at too great range to accomplish anything; and about half an hour after the first shot had been fired, the British ships hauled out of the fight for the time

[1] Letters of Captain Hillyar, March 30th, 1814, and Captain Porter, July 3rd, 1814.

being. "Our first fire . . . produced no visible effect; our second . . . was not apparently more successful; and, having lost the use of our mainsail, jib, and mainstay, appearances were a little inauspicious," wrote Captain Hillyar in his official report.

The damages were soon repaired, and the two ships stood back for the *Essex*. The *Phœbe* anchored off her port quarter, at about 5.35 P.M., while the *Cherub* kept under way, using her long bow-chasers. They were out of reach of Porter's carronades, his long-guns would not bear, and the enemy was gradually knocking the *Essex* to pieces without suffering any damage in return. This could not be borne, and at 5.50 Porter severed his cable and tried to close with his antagonists. His rigging and sails were cut almost to pieces. Still, the *Essex* drove down on her assailants, and for the first time got near enough to use her carronades. After exchanging a couple of broadsides, the *Cherub* hauled out of the fight, and the *Phœbe* also edged off. The latter now possessed the superiority of sailing, for her foe was almost helpless, and so Hillyar was able to choose his own distance. Again he opened with his long 18's, out of range of the *Essex's* carronades. All that Porter could do was to reply with his long 12's. There was no hope of success left, but the *Essex* was not yet ready to surrender.

From that point on it was a slaughter rather than a battle. The carnage in the American frigate

made her decks look like shambles. Throughout the entire war no ship on either side was so desperately defended as the *Essex*, taking into account the frightful odds against which she fought; indeed, the *Frolic*, the *Reindeer*, and the *Lawrence* were the only ships which in this respect deserved any comparison with her. Captain Hillyar in his official report says, "The defence of the *Essex*, taking into consideration our superiority of force, and the very discouraging circumstances of her having lost her maintopmast, and being twice on fire, did honour to her brave defenders, and fully evinced the courage of Captain Porter and those under his command." A middle-aged man, cool and wary, he very properly declined to expose his men to needless danger; but his first Lieutenant, William Ingram, a hot-headed, impulsive young fellow, begged him to close and run Porter aboard, for it was "deliberate murder" to lie off at long range and use a defenceless foe as a target. Poor gallant Ingram was himself slain in the fight, a splinter striking him in the head as he stood by the rail.

Midshipman Farragut was naturally enough very much impressed by his baptism of fire, and he has preserved for us most of what we know of what occurred on board the *Essex* during the time of slaughter that preceded her surrender.

One gun was manned three times, fifteen men being slain at it. Its captain alone escaped without a wound. As Farragut stood by another gun, he

saw four of its crew killed by a single ball. There were but one or two instances of flinching. The wounded, many of whom were killed by flying splinters while under the hands of the doctors, cheered on their comrades, and themselves worked the guns until the mortal weakness came upon them. At one of the guns was a young Scotsman named Bissly, who had one leg shot off close to the groin. Using his handkerchief as a tourniquet, he said, turning to his American shipmates, "I left my own country and adopted the United States to fight for her. I hope I have this day proved myself worthy of the country of my adoption. I am no longer of any use to you or to her, so good-bye!" With these words he leaned on the sill of the port and threw himself overboard. Among the very few men who flinched was one named William Roach. Porter sent one of his midshipmen to shoot him, but he was not to be found. He was discovered by a man named William Call, whose leg had been shot off and was hanging by the skin, and who dragged the shattered stump all round the bag-house, pistol in hand, trying to get a shot at the fellow. A singular feature of Roach's cowardice was that on previous occasions he had shown much courage. He could fight well when there was a hope of victory, but he flinched in the awful hour of disaster. Lieutenant J. G. Cowell had his leg shot off above the knee, and his life might have been saved had it been amputated at once; but the surgeons had already

rows of wounded men waiting for them, and when it was proposed to him that he should be attended to out of order, he replied, "No doctor, none of that — fair play 's a jewel! One man's life is as dear as another's. I would not cheat any poor fellow out of his turn."

Finding it hopeless to try to close, Porter stood for the land, intending to run the *Essex* ashore and burn her. But when she had drifted close to the bluffs, the wind suddenly shifted, took her flat aback, and paid her head off shore, exposing herself to a raking fire. At that moment Lieutenant John Downes, commanding the *Essex Junior*, pulled out in a boat, in spite of the cannonade, to see if he could do anything. Three of the men with him, including an old boatswain's mate named Kingsbury, had come out expressly "to share the fate of the old ship"; so they remained on board, and in their places Lieutenant Downes took some of the wounded ashore under a heavy fire. The shift of the wind gave Porter a faint hope of closing; and once more the crippled and riddled *Essex* was headed for her foes. But Hillyar put his helm up to avoid close quarters. The battle was his already, and he was too good an officer to leave anything to chance. Seeing that he could not close, Porter had a hawser bent on the sheet-anchor, which he let go. This brought the ship's head round, keeping her stationary; and, from such of her guns as were not dismounted and had men enough left to man them, a

broadside was fired at the *Phœbe.* The wind was now very light, and the *Phœbe,* whose masts were seriously wounded, and which had suffered much aloft, beside receiving a number of shot between wind and water, thus being a good deal crippled, began to drift slowly to leeward. Porter hoped that she would drift out of gunshot; but even this chance was lost by the parting of the hawser, which left the *Essex* at the mercy of the British vessels. Their fire was deliberate and destructive, and could only be occasionally replied to by a shot from one of the American's long 12's. The ship caught fire, and the men came tumbling up from below with their clothes burning. To save the lives of some of them they were ordered to jump overboard; and others, thinking it a general order, followed suit, leaping into the sea and trying to swim to the land. Some failed, and were drowned. Others succeeded: among them being one man who had sixteen or eighteen pieces of iron in his leg, scales from the muzzle of a gun. The old boatswain's mate, Kingsbury, was one of those who escaped by swimming to shore, though he was so burned that he was out of his mind for several days.

The frigate had been cut to pieces above the water-line, although, from the smoothness of the sea, she was not harmed enough below it to reduce her to a sinking condition. The carpenter reported that he alone of his crew was fit for duty: the others were dead or disabled. One of the lieuten-

ants had been knocked overboard by a splinter and drowned. He had as a servant a little negro boy, who, coming on deck and hearing of the disaster, deliberately leaped into the sea and shared his master's fate. Another of the lieutenants was also knocked overboard, but was not much hurt, and swam back to the ship. The only commissioned officer left on duty was Lieutenant Decatur McKnight. Of the two hundred and fifty-five men on board, fifty-eight had been killed, sixty-six wounded, and thirty-one drowned, while twenty-four had succeeded in reaching shore. Only seventy-six men were left unwounded, and many of them had been bruised or otherwise injured. Porter himself had been knocked down by the windage of a passing shot. Farragut had been acting as powder-boy, messenger, and everything else. While he was on the ward-room ladder, going below for gun-primers, the captain of the gun directly opposite the hatchway was struck full in the face by an 18-pounder shot, and tumbled back on him. They fell down the hatch together, Farragut being stunned for some minutes. Later, while standing by a man at the wheel, an old quarter-master named Francis Bland, a shot, coming over the foreyard-arm, took off the quarter-master's right leg, carrying away at the same time one of Farragut's coat-tails.

Nothing remained to be done; and at twenty minutes past six the *Essex* surrendered. The *Phœbe* had lost four killed, and seven wounded; the *Cherub*,

one killed, and three, including Commander Tucker, wounded; or fifteen all told.

Captain Porter in his letter spoke very bitterly of Hillyar's violation of the neutrality, and sneered at his excessive caution before and during the fight. Most American writers, including even Farragut, have repeated the denunciations and the sneers. Captain Hillyar did, of course, break the neutrality laws in circumstances which made their violation peculiarly irritating; for he paid respect to them so long as Porter was in good fighting trim, and broke them the minute the enemy was crippled and could be attacked with safety. But as yet respect for international law does not stand on a level with respect for the law of one's own land; and the chief thing to be considered is whether the irritation caused by the violation of neutrality will compensate for the advantage gained. In this case the capture of the *Essex* certainly compensated for any injury done to the feelings of Chili; and the circumstances in which the violation of neutrality took place, though not creditable, were no more discreditable than those which attended the capture of the Confederate steamer *Florida* by a Northern cruiser in the American Civil War.

Before the action Hillyar seems to have been rather over-cautious, showing, perhaps, too much hesitation about engaging the *Essex* without the assistance of the *Cherub*. The *Essex* was the faster ship; and this over-caution would have resulted in

her escape had it not been for the accident which caused the loss of her topmast. But, in the action itself, Hillyar's conduct was eminently proper. It would have been foolish, by coming to close quarters, to forego the advantage which his entire masts and better artillery gave him. He treated his prisoners with the utmost humanity and kindness. Says Sir Howard Douglas, "The action displayed all that can reflect honour on the science and admirable conduct of Captain Hillyar and his crew, which, without the assistance of the *Cherub*, would have insured the same termination. Captain Porter's sneers at the respectful distance the *Phœbe* kept are in fact acknowledgments of the ability with which Captain Hillyar availed himself of the superiority of his arms."

Following the defeat of the *Essex* came the destruction of the American fur-posts on the Columbia, and of what was left of the American whaling trade in the South Seas. The *Essex* had made a romantically daring cruise, and had ended her career by an exhibition of fighting which, for dauntless courage, could not be surpassed. She had inflicted much damage on her foes, and had given great temporary relief to American interests; but the fact remained that her cruise ended in disaster, and in the sweeping of the American flag from the Pacific. It is a very old truth, though one which many legislators seem slow to learn, that no courage and skill on the part of sea-officers can atone for

insufficiency in the number, and inefficiency in the quality, of ships. To do permanent damage to British interests in the Pacific, or anywhere else, the Americans would have needed, even aside from a fleet of battle-ships, a goodly number of frigates as formidable as those with which they won their early victories.

THE WARFARE ON THE LAKES

THE forces opposed — Lake Ontario — Defence of Sackett's Harbour — Capture of the *Julia* and *Growler* — Chauncey and Yeo — The affair at Big Sandy Creek — A contest of shipbuilding — Lake Erie — Cutting out of the *Caledonia* — Barclay and Perry — Battle of Lake Erie — American repulse at Macinaw — Capture of the *Tigress* and *Scorpion* — Cutting-out affair at Port Erie — Lake Champlain — Capture of the *Growler* — Macdonough and Downie — Battle of Plattsburg Harbour.

BESIDES the ocean ones, both the United States and Great Britain possessed inland sea-boards; for the boundary line between the United States and Canada traversed the extreme northern end of Lake Champlain, and went along the middle of Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, and Superior. These inland waters were the scenes of important naval engagements — important, that is, in their effects, though they were waged between diminutive flotillas. East of Lake Champlain practically to the ocean, and westward of it nearly to Lake Erie, stretched a wooded wilderness, impassable for armies. In consequence, the effort to invade either territory had to be made in the neighborhood of one of the lakes; and the control of the latter was important to the success of any offensive operations whatsoever, and was indispensable to their success if they were to be conducted on a large scale.

The naval warfare on the lakes, therefore, differed in several points from the naval warfare on the ocean. On the lakes, the success of a sea fight might, and did, determine the success or the failure of military operations the outcome of which would have great weight upon the result of the war; whereas, on the ocean, no success which the American warships could win could possibly have any other than a moral effect. In the next place, on the lakes special flotillas had to be constructed, so that there the enormous British preponderances in sea-might did not prevail. Finally, the crews themselves were made up of more or less heterogeneous elements; and there was little difference between them in point of skill.

The country around Lake Champlain was reasonably well settled on both the Canadian and American sides, though very remote from the centres of population. Both sides of Lake Erie were still chiefly wooded wilderness. On Lake Ontario the Canadian side had been longer settled, and was more thickly populated than the American. Moreover, it was easier of access, for the great river St. Lawrence connected it with the sea. The American outposts, however, could keep up their connection with the coast districts only through the Mohawk Valley, which in its upper part merged into a forest that stretched to the lakes unbroken, save by occasional clearings and squalid log hamlets, while the roads were very bad. On Lake Champlain both

sides were entirely unprepared. On Lake Ontario and Lake Erie the British were very much ahead. They had on Lake Ontario a squadron of six ships, brigs and schooners, mounting from eight to twenty-two guns each; while the United States had only one brig, the *Oneida*, of sixteen guns. On Lake Erie the British had another squadron of six ships —brigs and schooners of from two to seventeen guns each.

It is quite impossible, and also quite needless, to fully detail the make, rig, armament, and complement of all the vessels employed, for some of the regularly built warships, and many of the sloops and schooners purchased and used as such, changed from time to time, not only in their rig, their armament, and their complement, but even in their names. Drafts of men from the regular navies of both nations were soon sent up to the lakes; but there were not enough regular men-of-wars' men to man the ships on either side, and the deficiency was supplied by the use of Canadian and American lake sailors, of militia, and of regular troops. One result of this mixed character of the force was that the superiority in training, and especially in gunnery, shown by the American on the ocean was not shown by the American on the lakes. There was little in the lake actions to show any difference in skill, as regards either the management of the sails or the handling of the guns; and in daring, resolution, and courage there was also a practical equality. It was

largely a test of the comparative merit and energy of the shipwrights. As the operations on the three lakes were entirely independent of one another, they can be considered separately.

Lake Ontario was the body of water on which the largest squadrons were gathered by both sides, and the land in its neighbourhood was the centre of operations in the Canadian campaigns; and, accordingly, this lake should have been the scene of the most important and decisive actions. Such was not the case, however, largely owing to the extremely cautious nature of the two men who respectively commanded the British and the American squadrons when they were finally put into fighting trim.

In 1812, when the war broke out, the Canadian squadron of six ships, mounting about eighty guns, was under the command of a provincial officer named Earle, who was not in the British regular service. The American brig *Oneida*, 16, Lieutenant Melancthon Thomas Woolsey, was stationed at Sackett's Harbour, the American headquarters on the lake, which was protected by a little battery mounting one long 32-pounder. On July 15th Earle's squadron made a feeble attack on the harbour. Woolsey landed some of the *Oneida's* carronades, and beat off the attack without much difficulty, the long 32 being the gun most used. On the retreat of the Canadian flotilla, Woolsey prepared to take the offensive. By capture and purchase he procured

six schooners, in which he mounted twenty-four long guns.

In September, 1812, Captain Isaac Chauncey arrived to supplant him in the supreme command. A party of ship-carpenters, officers, and seamen, with guns, stores, etc., followed him to the harbour; and preparations were at once made to build some efficient ships. Meanwhile Chauncey took the lake with the little squadron already prepared by Lieutenant Woolsey. The Canadian flotilla was of double his force, but, as already said, it really formed only a species of water militia, and was not capable of making head against regular seamen of the United States navy, just as at the same time the American militia proved unable to make head against the British regulars on land. Chauncey not only chased the Canadian squadron off the lake, but also attacked it when it took refuge under the batteries of Kingston, which was the naval headquarters on the Canadian side. No serious results followed on this attack, any more than on the previous attack on Sackett's Harbour; but it was noteworthy that it should have been made at all, when the attacking force was so greatly inferior.

During the winter both sides made preparations for the warfare in the spring. The lake service was very unpopular with the Americans, so that it proved difficult to get men to volunteer for it at all. The only way they were persuaded to come was by inducing them to serve under officers whom they

liked, and who went with them. In the British service this particular difficulty was not encountered, as men could be sent wherever the Admiralty ordered; but the demands of the great ocean fleets were so stringent that it was hard to spare men for the service on these remote inland waters. However, by May, 1813, five hundred British seamen had been set up under Captain Sir James Lucas Yeo. Two ships were being built at Sackett's Harbour by the Americans, and two others, of twenty-four guns each, by the British at York and Kingston, at opposite ends of the lake. Thanks to the energy of Mr. Henry Eckford, the head builder, the work on the American side was pushed with greater rapidity, and larger and somewhat better ships were built. In addition to the new ships, Sir James kept the five best of the original Canadian squadron, and Chauncey kept the *Oneida*, and purchased a dozen schooners. When the two squadrons were completely ready, Chauncey had a great superiority in long-guns and Sir James in carronades. In smooth weather, therefore, when Chauncey could choose his distance, he possessed much advantage; but whereas all the British ships were regularly built for men-of-war, and sailed well in rough weather, Chauncey's schooners were without bulwarks, and were rendered so top-heavy by their guns that, in a sea-way, the latter could not be used at all.

In the spring of 1813 the Americans, thanks to the energy with which their shipwrights had worked,

were able to take the lake first. On April 27th Chauncey's squadron joined in the attack on York, whither he convoyed some 1700 troops under the immediate command of General Pike. The attack was successful: the 24-gun ship, which had been almost completed, was burned, many military and naval stores were destroyed, and the 10-gun brig *Gloucester* was captured and taken back to Sackett's Harbour.[1]

On the 27th of May, Chauncey's squadron again took part, with Colonel Scott of the land forces (which were conveyed in troop-ships and in the craft which had been captured at York), in a successful attack on Fort George.[2] The result of this attack was that the British troops evacuated the entire Niagara frontier, thereby enabling Captain Oliver Hazard Perry to get into Lake Erie with five small vessels which became the nucleus of the American force on that water. Up to that time they had not been able to get past the British batteries into the lake.

These attacks on York and Fort George had been well executed; but no great fighting capacity was needed, the assailants being in very much greater force than the assailed. Hitherto the British flotilla had not been strong enough to interfere with the

[1] Letter of Chauncey, April 28th, 1813; Lossing's 'Field-Book of the War of 1812,' p. 581.

[2] Chauncey's letter, May 29th, 1813; James's 'Military Occurrences,' i. 151.

Americans, though the largest American ship was still in the dock at Sackett's Harbour; but, at about the time when Chauncey's squadron was at Fort George, the British ship which had been built at Kingston was launched, and this made the British squadron superior in strength for the moment. Sir James Lucas Yeo, together with Sir George Prevost, the Commander-in-Chief of the land forces in Canada, decided to strike a blow at Sackett's Harbour, and destroy the big American ship there, so ensuring their superiority in force on the lake for the remainder of the season. On May 27th they embarked, and on the following day captured some boats which were transporting troops to Sackett's Harbour. On the 29th Sir George and Sir James made their attack on the harbour, which was defended by General Jacob Brown. The defences of the port consisted merely of the one-gun battery and a block-house. The attack resulted in a rather bloody repulse, though at one time it seemed on the point of succeeding.[1] The attacking force was relatively very much weaker than were the Americans at Fort George and York, but it was certainly strong enough to have succeeded if properly handled; and the failure caused much recrimination between the followers of Sir James and Sir George.[2]

[1] The British, however, succeeded in burning the *Gloucester*, 10, which had been captured at York. — W. L. C.

[2] Letter of Adjutant-General Baynes, May 30th, 1813; James's 'Military Occurrences,' i. 173.

During June, Yeo kept the lake undisputed, and actively co-operated with the British army in the operations which resulted in the humiliating repulse of the American General Wilkinson's expedition into Canada. In July Chauncey once more took the lake, his new ship being ready. Throughout August and September the two squadrons were facing one another on the lake, each commander manœuvring with a caution that amounted to timidity. In smooth water and with all the ships in action, Chauncey undoubtedly possessed the superiority in force; but on the 8th of August he received a severe lesson as to the unseaworthiness of his schooners, for the two largest went to the bottom in a heavy gust of wind, their guns breaking loose when they heeled over. Moreover, as the ships were of widely different types, it was only possible to get them all into action by causing one half of the squadron to tow the other half.

On August 10th there occurred the one encounter in which either side can be said to have shown anything approaching to brilliancy; and all the credit must be given to the British. Yeo, after two days of cautious manœuvring, finally made a night attack on Chauncey's squadron. Chauncey, partly owing to his own blunder and partly to the blunder of two of his schooners, the *Julia* and *Growler*, allowed the latter to be cut off, and they were both of them captured by Yeo, who deserved great praise.[1]

[1] Letters of Yeo, Aug. 10th, 1813, and Chauncey, Aug. 13th, 1813.

For the next six weeks the skirmishes on the lakes continued, each commander in his official letters stoutly maintaining that he was chasing the other. As a matter of fact, Yeo was determined only to fight in heavy, and Chauncey only in light weather. On September 11th a long-range skirmish occurred at the mouth of the Genesee River. The heavy guns of the American schooners gave their side the advantage in this affair, but nothing decisive resulted.[1]

On September 28th the squadrons again came into contact near York Bay. On that occasion the Americans were to windward; and Chauncey at last made up his mind to try a real fight. But Yeo succumbed with very little resistance. The American vessels suffered hardly at all. Chauncey led his squadron in the *Pike*, much the heaviest vessel in either squadron. Yeo's ship, the *Wolfe*, speedily had her main and mizen topmasts shot away; whereupon Yeo crowded all sail forward, and hastily got out of the combat, leaving his retreat to be covered by the *Royal George*, Captain William Howe Mulcaster. Mulcaster luffed across the *Wolfe's* stern, and stood the brunt of the action until his commodore was in safety, when he himself followed suit, having lost his fore topmast. For an hour the American ships followed, and then relinquished the pursuit when the British were running into the entirely undefended port of Burlington Bay, whence

[1] Letters of Yeo, Sept. 12th, 1813, and Chauncey, Sept. 13th, 1813.

escape would have been impossible.[1] The only loss inflicted by the British guns had been to the American schooner *Tompkins*, under Lieutenant Bolton Fitch, who shared with Captain Mulcaster what there was of glory in the day. The fight, or skirmish, such as it was, was decisive in so far as concerned any further attempts by Yeo to keep the lake that season, for thereafter his squadron remained in Kingston, part of the time blockaded by Chauncey. But Chauncey deserved no credit for the action. He possessed an undoubted superiority in force, and his opponents made very little resistance, so that the victory was cheap; and his conduct in abandoning the pursuit and thereby losing the fruits of the victory was inexplicable. He did not order his swifter vessels to cast off the slower ones which they were towing, so he could not overtake the fleeing enemy; and he did not follow them into the open roadstead where they sought refuge. He afterwards alleged that he feared to make the attack in Burlington Bay lest the wind should blow up to a gale and drive both squadrons ashore; and that he hoped to be able to make another attack at a more suitable time. Such excuses simply serve to mark the difference between the commander who allows caution to degenerate into irresolution, and the bold

[1] Letter of Chauncey, Sept. 28th, 1813; Brenton, ii. 503. Unfortunately, the British Admiralty had at that time adopted the rule of not publishing official accounts of defeats, so there is no printed letter of Yeo's.

leader of men. Chauncey had missed the great opportunity of his life.

In 1814 the contest degenerated into one of shipbuilding merely. The shipwrights under Yeo and Chauncey began to build huge frigates and to lay down battleships, while the schooners were no longer included in the cruising squadrons.[1] Chauncey had recaptured the *Julia* and the *Growler* in a successful attack upon some British transports. The *Growler*, however, was again captured on May 3rd, 1814, when Yeo, who took the lake first, began a successful attack on Oswego,[2] the British troops being under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Fischer.[3] Yeo then blockaded Sackett's Harbour. On May 30th he sent an expedition of six boats with seven guns and one hundred and eighty men, under Commanders Stephen Popham and Francis Brockell Spilsbury, to attack an American convoy under Captain Woolsey which was bringing up guns and cables for the new American frigates. Woolsey ran

[1] On April 15th, there were launched, by the British, at Kingston, the *Prince Regent*, 58, and the *Princess Charlotte*, 42. On May 1st the Americans, at Sackett's Harbour, launched the *Superior*, 62, and on June 11th, the *Mohawk*, 48. — W. L. C.

[2] In the capture of Oswego, the British lost 18 killed and 64 wounded, among the former being Captain William Holtoway, R.M., and among the latter Captain William Howe Mulcaster, Commander Stephen Popham, and Lieutenant Charles William Griffith Griffin. The American loss was 6 killed, 38 wounded, and 25 missing. Three schooners and seven guns were carried away by the victors, and a schooner and six guns were destroyed. — W. L. C.

[3] Yeo's letter, May 17th, 1814.

into Big Sandy Creek, eight miles from the harbour, where he was joined by some militia and a company of light artillery, under Major Appling. The British force was absurdly inadequate for the duty to which it was assigned; Americans had every advantage of position, and outnumbered the attacking party. Woolsey and Appling arranged an ambush, and, with the loss of only one man slightly wounded, killed [1] or captured the entire body of assailants. [2]

On July 6th Yeo raised the blockade, and, for six weeks, nothing was done except that Lieutenant Francis Gregory, U.S.N., twice led daring and successful cutting-out expeditions, in one of which he captured a British gunboat, and in the other destroyed a 14-gun schooner which was nearly ready for launching. In August, Commodore Chauncey's vessels having been built, Captain Yeo in his turn promptly retreated to port, where he was blockaded. The difference in force against Yeo was about 15 per cent., and he declined to fight with these odds against him. A little later, in October, his two-decker, the *Prince Regent*, 58, being completed, Yeo

[1] The attacking party consisted of 180 seamen and Royal Marines. It lost 18 killed and 50 badly wounded, among the latter being Lieutenants Thomas S. Cox and Patrick M'Veagh, R.M. Popham's official letter ended: "The exertions of the American officers of the rifle corps commanded by Major Appling, in saving the lives of many of the officers and men whom their own men and the Indians were devoting to death, were conspicuous, and claim our warmest gratitude." — W. L. C.

[2] Letters of Woolsey and Appling, June 1st and May 30th, 1814.

in his turn took the lake; and the equally cautious Chauncey promptly retired to Sackett's Harbour.

Chauncey varied the game by quarreling with General Brown, alleging that the latter was making a "sinister attempt" to subordinate the navy to the army.[1] He insisted — wherein he was quite right — that his proper objective was the enemy's fleet, and that he could best serve the army by destroying the British vessels. This was true enough; but the timid and dilatory tactics employed by both Chauncey and Yeo were such as to render it certain that neither would ever inflict a serious blow on the other, for neither would fight unless the odds were largely in his favour; and when such was the case, he could not persuade his opponent to meet him; so that the best either could do was to assist the army in the way against which Chauncey protested. Both Chauncey and Yeo were good organisers: each in turn assisted the land forces on his side more or less by getting control of the lake; but, towards the end, the contest became almost farcical, for it was one of shipbuilding merely, and the minute either party completed a new ship the other promptly retired into harbour until able in turn to complete a larger one.

On Lake Erie the course of events was very different, for the commanders on that sheet of water displayed none of the extreme and timid caution

[1] Niles, vii. 12, vi.

which characterised the two commodores on Lake Ontario.

At the outbreak of the war the British squadron on Lake Ontario consisted of the *Queen Charlotte*, 16, *Lady Prevost*, 12, *Hunter*, 10, *Caledonia*, 2, *Little Belt*, 2, and *Chippeway*, 2. These were all manned by Canadians, and, like the vessels on Lake Ontario, were not part of the British regular Navy, but formed a species of water militia. The American navy was not represented on Lake Erie at all; but Hull's army at Detroit had fitted out a small brig, the *Adams*, armed with six 6-pounders, which fell into the hands of the British when Hull and his army were captured by the gallant British General Brock. The *Detroit*, ex *Adams*, was then put in charge of Lieutenant Rolette, R.N., assisted by a boatswain, and was provided with a crew of fifty-six men. She was in company with the *Caledonia*, a small brig mounting two guns, with a crew of twelve Canadians under Mr. Irving. In all the fighting on the upper lakes the bulk of the British crews was composed of Canadians and of British soldiers; whereas on Lake Ontario the ships were manned by British sailors from the fleet.

The *Detroit* and the *Caledonia*, carrying a very valuable cargo of furs and about forty American prisoners, moved down the lake, and on October 7th, 1812, anchored under the guns of the British Fort Erie.

Commander Jesse D. Elliott, U.S.N., had already

been sent to Lake Erie to construct a naval force. On the very day on which the two brigs came to anchor under the British fort the first detachment of the American seamen, fifty-one in number, arrived at Black Rock, on the American side, where Elliott was stationed. They had no arms; but sabres, pistols, and muskets were supplied by the commander of the land forces, who also detailed seventy soldiers under Captain Towsen to act with Elliott, the total force being 124.[1] On the 9th, Elliott, acting with great promptness and decision, left in two large boats, one under his own command, the other under Towsen, intending to cut out the British vessels. After two hours' rowing the boats reached the brigs. Elliott took his own boat alongside the *Detroit* and boarded her before the surprised crew knew their danger, though there was a scuffle in which one American was killed and one wounded. The noise roused the Canadians in the *Caledonia*, and they made more resistance to the other boat. However, it was too late, and the *Caledonia* was carried with a rush, all twelve of the Canadians being cut down or made prisoners. Five of the Americans were killed or wounded. The *Caledonia* was brought back in safety to the American side, but the *Detroit* had to be destroyed.

This ended the naval operations of 1812 on Lake Erie, except that the American Commander Angus, with eighty sailors, took part in one of the abortive

[1] Letter of Elliott, Oct. 5th, 1812; Lossing, p. 385.

attacks made by the American General Smith on some of the British batteries. Late in the winter Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry arrived and took command.

Commander Robert Heriot Barclay (actg.), R.N., was appointed commander of the British forces on Lake Erie, in May, 1813. He began to build a 20-gun ship at Amherstburgh. Some seventy sailors from the British Navy were sent to him, and there were about twice that number of Canadian sailors already in the flotilla. The remainder, at least half, of his men were soldiers sent from the British army on shore.

Perry began the construction of two 20-gun brigs at Presqu'isle, now Erie. Over one-half of the men who manned his squadron were seamen from the regular Navy on the Atlantic coast; about a third were soldiers and marines; and about a tenth were volunteers from among the frontiersmen around the lake.

The crews and vessels on both sides were of the order of makeshifts, although the splendid courage and efficiency with which the men fought was a sufficient proof that there was no difficulty in bringing such material up to the highest standard; for the British and American seamen from the ocean, the American and Canadian frontiersmen and lake sailors, and the soldiers from both armies, who formed the crews, offered fine fighting stuff.

The lake vessels were very much shallower than

those used for the deep seas. Their tonnage was estimated arbitrarily, on the supposition that, like the ordinary ocean vessels, they were deep in a given proportion to their length and breadth. If allowance were made for the shallowness of the lake vessels, their tonnage would be of course very much less. Thus, making such allowance, the British 20-gun ship built by Barclay, which he christened the *Detroit*, was of only 305 tons, while, if estimated in the usual manner, it was of 490. The two brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, which Perry was building, were similarly of either 300 or 480 tons. However, the tonnage was really a matter of small moment in war vessels, except to indicate the size above the water-line, for they carried no cargoes; so that the tonnage of the lake vessels may as well be reckoned as though it were a case of ordinary ocean vessels. Reckoning thus, Barclay's second ship, the *Lady Charlotte*, was of 400 tons; his third, the *Lady Prevost*, of 230; and his fourth, the *Hunter*, of 180 tons. On the American side the *Caledonia*, like the *Hunter*, was of 180 tons, and the largest schooner, the *Ariel*, of 112. The other schooners and sloops on both sides were of from 70 to 95 tons apiece.

The two American brigs and the British ship were completed in August. Until their completion the British squadron was superior in force, and Barclay kept up a close blockade of the harbour of Erie, where there was a bar having on it less than

seven feet of water. This bar prevented the British from going in, but it also prevented the two American brigs from getting out so long as the enemy was off the harbour. Finally Barclay, early in August, was obliged to be away for a couple of days; and Perry by great exertions managed to get the two brigs across the bar without their guns, which were put in later.[1] Soon afterwards the *Detroit* joined Barclay's squadron, and the captains made ready for battle.

Barclay's squadron was so inferior in force that he would not have been justified in risking action if it could have been avoided. But there was no alternative. The control of Lake Erie virtually decided the control of the disputed territory around the Detroit River. Moreover, Barclay was so short of provisions that he had to bring matters to a head. On September 10th, 1813, the two squadrons came together.

Perry had nine vessels, the brigs *Lawrence*, *Niagara*, and *Caledonia*, the schooners *Ariel*, *Scorpion*, *Somers*, *Porcupine*, and *Tigress*, and the sloop *Trippe*. Their total tonnage was 1671, and their total crews amounted to 532 men; but sickness had been so prevalent that only about 416 were fit for duty. In his vessels fifty-four guns were mounted, fourteen of which were on pivots. In the action his broadside weight of metal was 896 pounds; 288 of which were thrown from long-guns. The *Lawrence* and *Niagara*

[1] Cooper, ii. 389.

were large men-of-war brigs, armed in the usual manner with eighteen 32-pr. carronades, and two long 12's apiece. The smaller vessels, in addition to two or three light carronades, carried long 32's, 24's, and 12's. Barclay's squadron consisted of six vessels, the ships *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, the brig *Hunter*, the schooners *Lady Prevost* and *Chippeway*, and the sloop *Little Belt*. The aggregate tonnage was 1460; the aggregate of the crews summed up to about 440 men.[1] The total number of guns was sixty-three, five being on pivots. The total broadside weight was 459 pounds, of which 195 were from long guns; for many of Barclay's guns were of very small calibre, including long 2's, 4's, and 6's, and 12-pr. carronades.

The difference in number of men between the two squadrons was not very material. Both had scratch crews, made up of regular seamen, of lake seamen, of British regulars, and a few Indians in Barclay's squadron, and American militia and a few negroes in Perry's. In tonnage Perry was superior by just about what would be indicated by the possession of three extra schooners. The decisive difference was in the armament. In weight of broadside the superiority of the Americans in long-gun metal was nearly as three to two, and in carronade metal it was greater than two to one.

[1] James (vi. 250, ed. 1837) puts the numerical strength of Barclay's command at only 345 men, including 80 Canadians, and 240 soldiers of the Newfoundland and 41st regiments. — W. L. C.

The ship *Detroit* mounted chiefly long guns, and was on the whole probably rather superior to either of Perry's big brigs. The *Queen Charlotte* was greatly inferior to either. The smaller vessels lacked the long guns which made the small American vessels formidable. In smooth water and at a distance the long guns of Perry's smaller vessels gave his squadron a very marked advantage; in a brisk breeze his two big brigs should have been almost a match for the entire British squadron.

When, at daylight on September 10th, Perry discovered Barclay's squadron he was at anchor at Put-In Bay. As soon as the ships were made out, Perry got under way and bore down toward them, having the weather gage. Barclay lay to in close column, the *Chippeway* ahead, followed by the *Detroit*, the *Hunter*, the *Queen Charlotte*, the *Lady Prevost*, and the *Little Belt*.[1] Perry went down with the wind off his port beam, and made the attack in column ahead obliquely. The *Erie* and *Scorpion* led the line a little ahead, and on the weather bow, of Perry's ship the *Lawrence*. Next came the *Caledonia*, and after her the *Lawrence's* twin sister, the *Niagara*, under Captain Jesse D. Elliott, whom Perry had superseded, and who

[1] The British vessels were commanded as follows: *Chippeway*, Master's Mate J. Campbell; *Detroit*, Commander Robert Heriot Barclay; *Hunter*, Lieutenant George Bignell; *Queen Charlotte*, Commander Robert Finnis (acting); *Lady Prevost*, Lieutenant Edward Wise Buchan. The commander of the *Little Belt* is unnamed in Barclay's letter of September 12th to Yeo. — W. L. C.

showed by his actions that he felt no particular zeal in helping Perry to gain glory. The *Niagara* was followed by the *Somers*, the *Porcupine*, the *Tigress*, and the *Trippe* in that order.[2]

The winds were light and baffling, and, as the American ships came down, they formed a straggling and irregular line which approached at an angle of about fifteen degrees to the line of Barclay's squadron, which was in much better and more compact order. At a quarter to twelve the *Detroit* opened the action with her long 24's. Her first shot fell short; her second crashed through the *Lawrence;* whereupon the *Scorpion* replied with her long 32. Ten minutes after the *Detroit* had first fired, the *Lawrence*, which had shifted her port bow-chaser into the place of one of the carronades on her starboard side, opened with both her long 12's. At noon she tried her carronades, but the shot fell short. Shortly afterwards the action became general on both sides, though the rearmost American vessels were still so far away that they were themselves not exposed to any danger at all, and only the longest guns occasionally reached. The *Lawrence* was steadily nearing Barclay's line, Perry making every effort to close; but it was half an hour after the *Detroit* had opened before the

[2] Letters of Captain Barclay and Lieutenant Inglis, Sept. 12th and 10th, 1813; of Captain Perry, Sept. 11th, 12th, and 13th. Lossing gives some valuable matter; so does Ward in his 'Naval Tactics,' and James in his 'Naval Occurrences.'

Lawrence got to the close quarters necessary for the effective use of her carronades. Throughout this half-hour Barclay's leading ships had concentrated their fire on Perry's vessel, and so the *Lawrence* had suffered a good deal; though the schooners *Scorpion* and *Ariel* had been pounding away with their long guns to help her.

For some time, therefore, the action at the head of the line was in favour of the British. The sides of the *Detroit* were dotted with marks of shot that did not penetrate, partly because of the long range, partly because the Americans in this action seemed to show a tendency to overload their carronades. There was a carronade in the *Scorpion* which upset down the hatchway as soon as it got hot; and one of the long guns on the *Ariel* burst. On the other side, the *Detroit* had her own difficulties. There were no locks for her guns, thanks to the hurry with which she had been prepared, and they had to be discharged by flashing pistols at the touch-holes. Nevertheless, Barclay fought her to perfection, and the trained artillerists among his seamen and soldiers aimed the guns so well that Perry had his hands full. The *Caledonia* came down beside the *Lawrence*, helping to divert the attention of the *Hunter* and the *Queen Charlotte* from her. But Elliott handled the *Niagara* poorly. He did not follow Perry to close quarters, but engaged the *Queen Charlotte* at a distance which rendered the carronades of both vessels useless. In fact, the only effective fighting

at the rear of the lines was that done by the four American gun vessels astern of the *Niagara*. Each of these had a long 32 or 24, of which, on such smooth seas, she could make good use against the *Lady Prevost*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Hunter;* the latter having an absurd armament of little guns which threw a broadside of thirty pounds all told. Both Commander Finnis, of the *Queen Charlotte*, and his first lieutenant, Thomas Stokoe, were killed early in the action. Her next in command, the Canadian Lieutenant Irvine, finding that he could make no effective answer to the long guns of the schooners, drew forward and joined in the attack on the *Lawrence* at close quarters. The *Niagara* was left practically without any antagonist, and, at the end of the line, the fight became one at long range between the *Somers*, *Tigress*, *Porcupine*, and *Trippe* on the one side, and the *Lady Prevost* and *Little Belt* on the other. The *Lady Prevost's* armament consisted chiefly of 12-pr. carronades. She made a noble fight, but such an armament at long range in smooth water was utterly useless against the heavy guns of the schooners. Her commander, Lieutenant Buchan, and her first lieutenant, Francis Rolette, were both seriously wounded, and she was greatly cut up, and began to fall to leeward.

The fight at the head of the line was waged with bloody obstinacy between the *Scorpion*, *Ariel*, *Lawrence*, and *Chesapeake*, on the one hand, and the *Caledonia*, *Detroit*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Chippeway*

on the other. Instead of pairing in couples, the ships on each side seemed to choose the largest opponents as special targets. The Americans concentrated their fire on the *Queen Charlotte* and *Detroit;* while the British devoted their attention mainly to the *Lawrence,* which had already suffered severely while working down to get within range of her carronades. The *Queen Charlotte* was soon almost disabled. The *Detroit* was also pounded practically to a standstill, suffering especially from the raking fire of the gunboats. Barclay was fighting her himself with the utmost gallantry; but he was so badly wounded that he was at last obliged to quit the deck. His first lieutenant, John Garland, was also wounded mortally; but Lieutenant George Inglis, to whom the command was turned over, continued the fight as gamely as ever.

Meanwhile the *Lawrence* was knocked to pieces by the combined fires of her adversaries. Of the one hundred and three men who had been fit for duty when she began the action, eighty-three were killed or wounded. As the vessel was so shallow, the ward-room, which was used as the cockpit into which the wounded were taken, was mainly above water, and the shots came through it continually. Many of the wounded were killed or maimed while under the hands of the surgeons. The first lieutenant, Yarnall, was hit three times, but refused to leave the deck, and fought the ship to the last. The only other lieutenant on board, Brooks, of the

marines, was mortally wounded. Every brace and bowline was shot away, and the hull was so riddled that it looked like a sieve. One by one the guns on the engaged side were dismounted, while the men were shot down until they could not man even the guns that were left. However, the slaughter of four-fifths of his crew before his eyes did not daunt Perry in the least. When there were no men left to serve the last three or four guns, he called down through the skylight for one of the surgeon's assistants. The call was repeated and obeyed, until all those officers had been used up. Then he shouted down, "Can any of the wounded pull a rope?" and three or four of them hobbled up on deck to help him lay the last guns. Finally, Perry himself was left with only the purser and chaplain, and by their aid he fired a final shot; and, immediately afterwards, the gun which he had used, the only one left, was disabled.

Meanwhile Mr. Turner in the *Caledonia*, having put his helm up, had passed the *Lawrence* and run into the British line, where he engaged at half pistol-shot distance, though his little brig was absolutely without quarters.

Perry's vessel lay an unmanageable hulk on the water, while the shot ripped through her sides, and there was not a gun that could be fired in return; but Perry had not the slightest intention of giving up the fight. He had gone into the battle flying on his flag Lawrence's dying words, "Don't give up the

ship" ; and he intended to live up to the text. The *Niagara* was at that time a quarter of a mile to windward of the *Lawrence* on her port-beam. She was steering for the head of Barclay's line, and was almost uninjured, having taken very little part in the combat, and never having been within a distance that rendered her carronades of any use. Perry instantly decided to shift his broad pennant to her. Leaping into a boat with his brother and four seamen, he rowed to the fresh brig, having literally been hammered out of the *Lawrence* by the pounding which he had received for two hours and a half. As soon as he reached the *Niagara*, he sent Elliott astern to hurry up the three rearmost schooners ; for the sloop *Trippe*, on her own account, had steered straight for the British line, and was very near the *Caledonia*. The *Lawrence*, having but fourteen sound men left, struck her colours ; but the action began again before possession could be taken of her, and she drifted astern out of the fight. At a quarter to three the schooners had closed, and Perry bore up to break Barclay's line, the powerful brig to which he had shifted his broad pennant being practically unharmed, as indeed were his rearmost gun-vessels.

The British ships had fought till they could fight no longer. The two smallest, the *Chippeway* and *Little Belt*, were not much damaged ; but the other four were too disabled either to fight or to manœuvre effectively so as to oppose fresh antagonists.

However, they answered as best they could, with great guns and musketry, as the *Niagara* stood down and broke the British line, firing her port battery into the *Chippeway*, *Little Belt*, and *Lady Prevost*, and her starboard battery into the *Detroit*, *Queen Charlotte*, and *Hunter*, raking on both sides. The *Detroit* and *Charlotte* had been so cut up aloft, almost every brace and stay being shot away, that they could not tack, and tried to wear; but they fell foul of one another, and the *Niagara* luffed athwart their bows, firing uninterruptedly, while, under their sterns, the *Caledonia* and the schooners stationed themselves so close that some of their grape-shot, passing over the British vessels, rattled through Perry's spars. The *Lady Prevost* had sagged to leeward, an unmanageable wreck. Barclay had done everything in the power of man to do. The first and second in command of every one of his six vessels had been either killed or wounded; and at three o'clock his flag was struck. The *Chippeway* and *Little Belt* tried to escape, but were overtaken and brought-to by the *Trippe* and the *Scorpion*, the commander of the latter, Mr. Stephen Champlin, firing the last shot of the battle, as he had likewise fired the first on the American side.

None of the American ships had suffered severely, excepting the *Lawrence*, to whose share over two-thirds of the total loss had fallen. In breaking the line, however, the *Niagara* had suffered somewhat; and the *Caledonia*, *Ariel*, *Scorpion*, and *Trippe* had

come in for some of the pounding. All told, twenty-seven men had been killed and ninety-six wounded, three mortally. The British loss amounted to forty-one killed and ninety-four wounded, chiefly in the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*. Barclay's letter is a model of its kind for generosity and manliness, stating matters precisely as they were. He needed no justification, for the mere recital of the facts was proof enough of his gallantry and skill. In his letter he stated, "Captain Perry has behaved in the most humane and attentive manner, not only to myself and officers, but to all the wounded." [1]

The victory was decisive, giving the Americans complete control of the upper lakes; and it was very important in its effects, putting an end to any effort to wrest from them the supremacy on the western frontier. Perry and the American shipwrights are entitled to high praise for the energy and forethought with which they prepared the squadron. Moreover, Perry showed the most determined courage and great fertility in resource, which enabled him not merely to destroy, but also to annihilate his enemy; and he deserved the credit he received. Both sides displayed the same dogged courage; but, on the whole, Barclay and his captains

[1] Lieutenant Robert Heriot Barclay had his Commander's commission confirmed on November 19th, 1813, ere news of the disaster reached the Admiralty. He was tried at Portsmouth for the loss of his flotilla on September 16th, 1814, and was "most fully and honourably acquitted." He was posted on October 14th, 1824, and died on May 12, 1837. — W. L. C.

unquestionably showed superior skill in the actual fighting. The disposition of the American line was such that it was brought into action by fragments. Captain Elliott did not fight the *Niagara* well; and four of the American gunboats were kept so far astern as to prevent their being of much use at first, so that the brunt of the action fell on the *Lawrence*, even during the early part of the action, when the fighting was at long range and her carronades were useless. Perry, towards the end, showed ability to use his force to the best advantage, and his own ship was faultlessly handled and fought; but some of his captains did not support him, nor one another, as they should have done. Whether through his fault or through his misfortune, he failed to get from them the full co-operation which he should have received.

Barclay's dispositions, on the contrary, were faultless; and the British captains supported one another, so that the disparity in damage done was not equal to the disparity in force. Barclay could not arrange his ships so as to be superior to his antagonists. In any circumstances, whether in rough water or in smooth, the Americans were the more formidable in force. All that he could do he did. Perry, in making his attack, had shown the same headlong energy as he had previously shown in preparing his squadron, and he behaved with that indomitable determination not to be beaten, than which, after all, there is no greater merit in any

fighter, afloat or ashore. The superior force of the Americans had been brought into action in such a manner that the head of the line was crushed by the inferior force opposed; but, when literally hammered out of his own ship, Perry had brought up her powerful twin sister, and overwhelmed the shattered hostile squadron, pushing the victory with such energy that all the opposing ships were captured. In other words, Providence, as so often before, declared in favour of the heavier battalions, when those battalions were handled with energy and resolution. The victory was due to heavy metal, as in many another sea fight between far greater forces. Like the victories of La Hougue and of Camperdown, waged between huge armadas, this combat between the little lake flotillas shows, what certainly ought not to need showing, that energy and forethought in preparing a superior force, and energy and courage in using it, will ensure victory if the skill and bravery on both sides be equal, or even if there be a slight advantage in skill on the part of the enemy.

The destruction of Barclay's squadron left the Americans undisputed masters of the upper lakes; but exactly as they had begun their career by a cutting-out expedition, which enabled them to acquire the nucleus of their squadron, so now they, in their turn, suffered by a couple of cutting-out expeditions, in which the British performed, at their expense, two really brilliant feats, though on a small scale. Neither feat was of weight enough to

interfere with the American supremacy, but both exploits reflected great credit on the victors, and caused much mortification to the vanquished.

In July, 1814, Captain Arthur Sinclair, U.S.N., sailed into Lake Huron with five of Perry's smaller vessels. He attacked the fort at Macinaw, but was repulsed, and then destroyed the British blockhouse on the Nattagawassa, together with an armed schooner;[1] but the crew of the schooner, under Lieutenant Miller Worsley, R.N., escaped up the river. Sinclair then departed for Lake Erie, leaving the *Scorpion*, under Lieutenant Turner, and the *Tigress*, under Sailing Master Champlin, to keep a watch on the river. The two commanders grew very careless, and paid the penalty; for the Indians brought word to the British that the two American vessels were in the habit of stationing themselves far apart, and it was at once resolved to attempt their capture. Accordingly, the effort was made with four boats, one manned by twenty seamen, under Lieutenant Miller Worsley, the other three by seventy-two soldiers, under Lieutenants Bulger, Armstrong, and Raderhurst of the army. Two light guns accompanied the expedition. After twenty-four hours' search the party discovered one vessel, the *Tigress*, late on the evening of September 3rd. It was very dark, and the British were not detected until they had come within fifty yards.

[1] This schooner was the *Nancy*, belonging to the North-West Company. — W. L. C.

Champlin at once fired his long-gun at them; but, before it could be reloaded, the four boats had run him on board, two on the starboard and two on the port side. The gunboat had no boarding nets, and the assailants outnumbered the crew by more than three to one, but there was a sharp struggle before she was carried. Of the twenty-eight men on board her, three were killed and five wounded, including Champlin himself, whose hurt was very severe. Of the assailants, the loss was still heavier, for it included two killed and a dozen wounded, one of whom was Lieutenant Bulger. The latter showed himself prompt to recognise courage in others, in addition to exhibiting it by his own acts. In his letter he wrote, "The defence of this vessel did credit to her officers, who were all severely wounded." [1]

Forty-eight hours afterwards the *Scorpion* rejoined her consort, entirely ignorant of what had occurred. She anchored two miles from the *Tigress*, and, in the dawn, the latter, with the American ensign and pennant still flying, ran her on board. The first notice her crew of thirty men had was a volley which killed two, and wounded two others; and she was carried without resistance. No one had time even to seize his arms.[2]

[1] Letter of Lieut. A. H. Bulger, Sept. 7th, 1814.

[2] For these services Lieutenant Miller Worsley was made a Commander on July 13th, 1815. He died, still in that rank, on May 2nd, 1835. — W. L. C.

This was an exceedingly creditable and plucky enterprise. At almost the same time an even more daring cutting-out expedition took place at the foot of Lake Erie. The three American schooners, *Ohio*, *Somers*, and *Porcupine*, each with thirty men, under Lieutenant Conkling, were anchored at the outlet of the lake to flank the works at Port Erie. Several British vessels [1] were lying off the fort in the Ontario waters, and their officers determined to make an effort to carry the American gunboats by surprise. On the night of August 12th Commander Alexander Dobbs and Lieutenant Copleston Radcliffe, with seventy-five seamen and marines, made the attempt.[2] Aided by some militia, they carried a gig and five bateaux twenty-eight miles overland to Lake Erie, launched them, and rowed toward the gunboats. At about midnight the look-out in the *Somers* discovered and hailed them. They answered, "provision boat," which deceived the officer on deck, as such boats were passing and repassing every night. In another moment they drifted across his hawser cut his cables and ran him on board. The two men on deck were shot down, and, before the others could get up, the schooner was captured. In another moment the British boats were alongside the *Ohio*,

[1] Including the *Charwell*, Commander Alexander Dobbs, *Netley*, Lieutenant Copleston Radcliffe, and *Star*. — W. L. C.

[2] James, in his 'Naval Occurrences,' gives the best account of this expedition; the American historians touch very lightly on it; precisely as, after the first year of the war, the British authorities ceased to publish official accounts of their defeats.

Lieutenant Conkling's own vessel. The sound of the firing had awakened his people, and, disordered though they were, they attempted resistance, and there was a moment's sharp struggle; but Conkling himself, and the only other officer on board, sailing master Cally, together with five seamen, were shot or cut down, and Dobbs carried the gunboat sword in hand. Lieutenant Radcliffe was killed, however, and seven British seamen and marines were killed or wounded. Dobbs then drifted down stream with his two prizes, the *Porcupine* being too demoralised to interfere. It was a very bold and successful enterprise, reflecting the utmost credit on the victors.[1]

At the beginning of the war the Americans had the supremacy on Lake Champlain, possessing two little sloops, each mounting eleven small guns, and six row-galleys, mounting one gun each, under the command of Lieutenant Sidney Smith. On June 3rd, 1813, Smith took his two sloops to the Sorrel River, the outlet of the lake, where he saw three British row-galleys, each mounting one long-gun. The wind was aft, and he imprudently chased the row-galleys down the river to within sight of the first British fort. The river was narrow, and the infantry at the fort promptly came to the assistance

[1] Alexander Dobbs, born in 1784, was a Commander of February 14th, 1814, and was posted on August 12th, 1819. He died at Milan in 1827. — W. L. C.

of the galleys, and began to fire on the sloops from both banks. The sloops responded with grape, and tried to beat back up the stream, but the current was so strong and the wind so light that no headway could be made. The row-galleys turned and began to fire with their long 24's, while the light guns of the sloops could not reach them in return. After three hours' manœuvring and firing, a shot from one of the galleys struck the *Eagle* under her starboard quarter and ripped out a whole plank. She sank at once, but in such shoal water that all her men got ashore. The *Growler* continued the fight alone, but her forestay and main-boom being shot away, she became unmanageable, ran ashore, and was captured. Of the 112 men on board the two sloops, twenty were killed or wounded and the rest captured. No one was touched in the galleys, but three of the British soldiers ashore were wounded by grape.[1]

Captain Thomas Macdonough was in command on the lake from that time onwards, and he set to work to build some new sloops. Until this was done there was nothing to interfere with the British. They rechristened the captured *Growler* and *Eagle*, *Chubb* and *Finch*, and with these and three row-galleys conveyed an expedition of about one thousand British troops, under Colonel Murray, which destroyed all the barracks and stores at Plattsburg

[1] Letter of Major Taylor (British) to General Stone, June 3rd, 1813.

and at Saranac on the last day of July. Three days later Macdonough completed three sloops[1] which, with his six row-galleys, restored to him the command of the lake. Nothing more was done during 1813.

In 1814, however, Lake Champlain became the scene of the greatest naval battle of the war.[2] In August a British army of eleven thousand men, under Sir George Prevost, undertook the invasion of New York by advancing along the bank of Lake

[1] *President*, 12; *Preble*, 7; and *Montgomery*, 9. — W. L. C.

[2] The squadrons engaged in the action on Lake Champlain, September 11, 1814: —

BRITISH.

Ships.	Guns.	Commanders.
Confiance	37	Commander George Downie.
Linnet	16	„ Daniel Pring.
Chubb	11	Lieutenant James M'Ghie.
Finch	11	„ William Hicks.

12 gunboats or row-galleys, mounting 17 guns and carronades in all.

AMERICAN.

Ships.	Guns.	Commanders.
Saratoga	26	Captain Thomas Macdonough.
Eagle	20	„ Robert Henley.
Ticonderoga	17	Lieut.-Com. Stephen Cassin.
Preble	7	

10 gunboats or row-galleys, mounting 16 guns and carronades in all.

— W. L. C.

Champlain. He got as far as the Saranac River, where the Americans had thrown up extensive earthworks. To cover Prevost's flank it was necessary that the British squadron on the lake should be able to overcome the American squadron. This squadron was put under the command of Captain George Downie. Both Downie and Macdonough were forced to build and equip their vessels with the utmost speed; and the two squadrons were both very deficient in stores, etc., some of the guns of each being without any locks, so that they had to be fired by means of pistols flashed at the touch-holes. Captain Macdonough took the lake a couple of days before his antagonists, and came to anchor in Plattsburg Bay. Captain Downie moved out of Sorrel River on September 8th; and on the morning of the 11th sailed into Plattsburg Harbour to the attack.[1]

The largest vessel of Downie's squadron was the ship *Confiance*. She was frigate built, of about 1200 tons' burden, and carried on her main deck

[1] Official letters of Prevost, Macdonough, and Pring. Admiral Codrington's 'Memoirs,' i. 322. Letter of Midshipman Lea, 'Naval Chronicle,' xxxii, 272. Cooper: both his 'History,' and especially his two articles in 'Putnam's Magazine.' James's 'History' and 'Naval Occurrences.' The various articles in 'Niles's Register' for September and October, 1814. Captain J. H. Ward's 'Manual of Naval Tactics.' Lossing's 'Field-book of the War of 1812,' i. 868, quoting Admiral Paulding. Navy Dept. MSS.: Letters of Macdonough before the battle: Log-book of the *Surprise* (*Eagle*), etc. Roosevelt's 'Naval War,' 147, 376. American State Papers, xiv. 572.

thirty long 24's. On her poop were two 32-pr. carronades, and on her top-gallant forecastle were four 32-pr. carronades and a long 24 on a pivot. Thanks to having a furnace, she was able to employ hot shot in the battle. His next vessel was the *Linnet*, a brig of 350 tons, mounting sixteen long 12's. The *Chubb* and the *Finch* were of about 110 tons each, carrying eleven light guns apiece. There were also twelve row-galleys of from 40 to 70 tons each. They carried seventeen guns, long 24's and 18's, and 32-pr. carronades. The crews aggregated from nine hundred to one thousand.[1] In all there were sixteen vessels, of about 2400 tons' total burden, with a total of ninety-two guns, throwing a broadside of 1192 pounds, 660 of which were from long guns, and 532 from carronades.

Macdonough had one heavy corvette, the *Saratoga*, of 734 tons, carrying eight long 24-pounders, and six 42-pr., and twelve 32-pr. carronades; a large brig, the *Eagle*, of about 500 tons, carrying eight long 18's and twelve 32-pr. carronades; a schooner, the *Ticonderoga*,[2] about the size of the *Linnet*, carrying eight long 12's, four long 18's, and five 32-pr. carronades; a sloop, the *Preble*, mounting seven light guns, and ten row-galleys of about the

[1] James (vi. 346, ed. 1837), I know not upon what authority puts the total of the British crews at 537; and he publishes a statement, which appears to be misleading, of the comparative forces engaged. — W. L. C.

[2] She had been a steamer, but her machinery continually got out of order, and she was changed to a schooner.

same size as the British, and mounting sixteen guns — 24's, 18's, and 12's. His aggregate of crews amounted to less than nine hundred men.[1] His fourteen vessels were of about 2200 tons, with eighty-six guns, throwing a broadside of 1194 pounds, only 480 of which were from long guns. In tonnage, number of men in crew, number of guns, and weight of metal in broadside, there was no great difference; but Downie possessed one marked advantage, for most of his pieces were long guns, whereas the weight of the American broadside was from carronades. In ordinary circumstances this made his flotilla much the stronger. Even under the conditions in accordance with which the battle was fought, the range was so long that the carronades could not be used with proper efficiency. Downie was almost as much superior in strength to Macdonough as Chauncey had been to Ye oon Lake Ontario in the summer of 1813, the difference in armament of the two squadrons being very similar in each case. Macdonough, having the weaker force, chose his position with such skill, and exercised such careful forethought, that he more than neutralised the material superiority of his opponents.

Both the squadrons were makeshifts. The row-galleys on both sides were manned chiefly by soldiers. The larger vessels, however, were manned mainly by sailors from the regular navies, British and American. The crews were gathered hastily,

[1] James puts the American force at 950 men. — W. L. C.

and had little training while on the lake, so that they betrayed various shortcomings, especially as artillerists, except in the *Confiance*, where Downie, and in the *Linnet*, where Pring, had the men at the highest point of efficiency. The armaments of the ships were of the most haphazard description, carronades and long-guns of different calibres being all jumbled together. The vessels were of every kind and rig. The Americans had a ship, a brig, a schooner, a sloop, and two kinds of row-galleys. The British possessed a ship, a brig, two sloops, and two kinds of row-galleys. It would have been exceedingly difficult for either squadron to undertake any kind of manœuvring in any kind of weather, as no two craft were alike in speed or handiness. Indeed, in a seaway, the frigate-built *Confiance* would have been a match for Macdonough's whole squadron, and the *Saratoga*, a heavy corvette, for all Downie's squadron except the *Confiance*. In point of fighting capacity the men who manned the two squadrons were about equal, for though some of the British accounts accuse certain of the British row-galleys of cowardice in the fight, the exhibition was probably due to the disheartening circumstances of seeing the big vessels fail, which, of course, ensured the repulse of the open galleys. In some circumstances an engagement on the lake would have been very much to Downie's advantage, and would have enabled him to make good use of his superiority in force; but Macdonough, a very cool and compe-

tent commander, had the advantage of the defensive, and utilised it to the full. All he had to do was to hold Downie in check, whereas Downie had to win a decisive victory if the invasion was to be a success.

Accordingly, Macdonough decided to await the attack at anchor in Plattsburg Bay, which is deep, and which opens to the southward. The lake being long and narrow, and running north and south, the winds usually blow up or down it, while the current sets northward toward the outlet. All the vessels were flat and shallow, and beat to windward with difficulty. In September, there are often sudden and furious gales which make it risky for any squadron to lie outside the bay until the wind suits; whereas, inside the bay, the breezes are apt to be light and baffling. A wind which would enable Downie to come down the lake would render it difficult for him to beat up the bay; and Macdonough made his arrangements accordingly. He moored his vessels in a north and south line, out of range of the shore batteries, and just south of the outlet of the Saranac. The head of his line was so close to shore as to render it very difficult to turn it. To the south a flank attack was prevented by a shoal, on which was a small island containing a hospital, and mounting one 6-pounder gun. The *Eagle* lay to the north: then came the *Saratoga*, the *Ticonderoga*, and the *Preble*, all at anchor, while the galleys, under their sweeps, formed a second line

forty yards back. By this arrangement it was rendered impossible for Downie to double the line, or to anchor completely out of reach of the American carronades; and his attack had to be made by standing in bows on. Macdonough realised thoroughly that he had to deal with a foe of superior physical force, and of great courage and seamanship, and he made every preparation possible. Nothing was left to chance. Not only were his vessels provided with springs, but also with anchors to be used astern in any emergency, so that they might shift their broadsides when necessary. If one battery was knocked to pieces he intended to use the other. Macdonough further prepared the *Saratoga* by laying a kedge broad off on either bow, with a hawser and preventer hawser, hanging in bights under water, leading from each quarter to the kedge on that side.

The morning of September 11th opened with a light breeze from the north-east, and Downie[1] weighed anchor at daylight, and came down the lake with the wind nearly aft, while Macdonough's sailors watched the upper sails of the British ships across the narrow strip of land which formed the outer edge of the bay. When he had opened the bay, Downie hove to with his four larger vessels, and waited until the row-galleys came up.

[1] Downie, it should be explained, was not ready, and weighed only at the urgent solicitation of General Sir George Prevost, who desired his co-operation. — W. L. C.

At about half-past eight[1] the British squadron stood gallantly in on the starboard tack, in line abreast. The *Chubb* stood to the north, while next came the *Linnet*, both heading for the *Eagle*, which they expected to weather, while the *Confiance* was to be laid athwart the hawse of the *Saratoga*, and the *Finch* and the row-galleys were to engage the *Ticonderoga* and the *Preble*, with the American row-galleys behind them. There were a few minutes of perfect quiet as the distance between the two squadrons lessened, the men waiting under great nervous tension for the moment of action. Then the *Eagle* fired her long 18's, but prematurely, for the shots fell short. Soon afterwards the *Linnet*, in her turn, fired her long 12's at the *Saratoga*, but these shots also fell short, except one that struck a hencoop which happened to be on board Macdonough's vessel. There was a gamecock inside, and when the coop was knocked to pieces he jumped up, clapped his wings, and crowed lustily. To the nervously-expectant sailors it seemed a good omen. They laughed and cheered, and, immediately afterwards, Macdonough himself fired one of his long 24's. His aim was good, and the ball ranged the length of the *Confiance*, killing and wounding several men. All the American long-guns opened, and those of the British galleys replied.

[1] According to the times in the British accounts, Downie filled and made sail at 7.40 A. M. See Pring's letter of September 12th to Yeo. — W. L. C.

The *Chubb* and the *Linnet* escaped nearly unscratched, and anchored on the *Eagle's* beam, for both the *Saratoga* and the *Eagle* devoted their attention chiefly to the *Confiance*. The latter frigate stood steadily in without replying to the American fire, but she was terribly cut up, losing both her port bow anchors; and she suffered much in her hull. She ported her helm, and came to while still about four hundred yards from the *Saratoga*. Downie came to anchor in grand style, making everything tight, and then delivered a well aimed and terribly destructive broadside into the *Saratoga*. Two or three of the British galleys took part in the attack on the head of the American line, where there were also five or six of the American row-galleys. Meanwhile the *Finch*, under her sweeps, led the remaining British row-galleys to the attack of the *Ticonderoga*, where the four or five weakest of the American row-galleys were also stationed.

At the foot of the line the British effort was to turn the American flank. At first the fighting was at long range, but gradually the assailants closed. On both sides there was great variety in the individual behaviour of the galleys, some being handled with the utmost courage, and others rather timidly, as was not unnatural, for the men in them were not used to their work, nor to act with one another; and the attack of each depended upon who its commander happened to be. Moreover, as they were open boats, it was easy to inflict very heavy

slaughter among the closely-crowded crews. The British galleys which took part in the attack on the *Ticonderoga* and the *Preble* were under the command of Lieutenant Christopher James Bell, and were well handled. Two or three of them hung back, as did those at the head of the line, where it was impossible to expect them to make head against the *Saratoga* and the *Eagle;* but where Bell himself led them, they followed him with the utmost determination. About an hour after the discharge of the first gun, the *Finch* got close to the *Ticonderoga*, only to be completely crippled by the broadsides of the latter. Half her crew were killed or wounded; and she drifted helplessly away, grounding near Crab Island, where she surrendered to the patients in the hospital. At about the same time the *Preble*, on the American side was forced out of line by the British gunboats, and drifted ashore out of the fight. The American gunboats in that part of the line also gave way. Two or three of the British row-galleys had already been so roughly handled by the long guns of the *Ticonderoga* that they made no further effort to come within effective range, so that, at the foot of the line, the fight became one between the *Ticonderoga*, under Lieutenant-Commander Stephen Cassin, on the one side, and the remaining British gunboats, under Lieutenant Bell, on the other. Bell's attack was most resolute, and the defence of the American schooner was equally obstinate. Cassin walked the quarterdeck, paying no heed to

the balls singing round him, while he scanned the movements of the galleys, and directed his guns to be loaded with canister and bags of bullets when the British tried to board. He was well seconded by his officers, especially by a young midshipman named Hiram Paulding. When Paulding found that the matches of his division were defective, he fired his guns by flashing pistols at the touch-holes during the remainder of the fight. Bell's galleys were pushed to within a boat-hook's length of the schooner; but her fire was so heavy that they could not get alongside, and one by one they drew off, so crippled by the slaughter that they could hardly man the oars.

At the head of the line the advantage had been with the British. The *Chubb*, however, was too light for the company she was in, and speedily suffered the fate of the *Preble* and the *Finch*, being driven out of the line. Her cable, bowsprit, and main-boom were shot away, and, when she drifted inside the American ships, she was taken possession of by a midshipman from the *Saratoga*. The *Linnet*, which was remarkably well handled by her captain, Daniel Pring, paid no attention to the American gunboats, directing her whole fire against the *Eagle*. The *Eagle* was a much heavier vessel, but she was also partially engaged with the *Confiance;* and, moreover, the *Linnet* was fought with the utmost courage and skill. After keeping up a heavy fire for a long time, the *Eagle's* springs were shot away,

and she hung in the wind, unable to answer the *Linnet* with a single shot. Accordingly, she cut her cables, started home her topsails, and ran down between, and in shore of, the *Saratoga* and *Ticonderoga*, where she again came to anchor and opened fire on the *Confiance*. The *Linnet* was then able to give her undivided attention to the American row-galleys. After she had driven them off she sprang her broadside so as to rake the *Saratoga*.

The *Saratoga* had already suffered heavily. The first broadside of the *Confiance's* double-shotted long 24's had crashed into her hull with a shock which threw half her people on the deck, knocking down many, and either killing or crippling them. Her first lieutenant, Peter Gamble, was among the slain, being killed just as he knelt down to sight the bow-gun. Macdonough himself worked like a tiger in pointing and handling his favourite piece. While bending over to sight it the spanker-boom above his head was cut in two by a round shot. It fell on him, and knocked him senseless for two or three minutes. Leaping to his feet, he again returned to the gun. Immediately afterwards a round shot took off the head of the captain of the gun, and drove it into Macdonough's face with such force as to knock him to the other side of the deck.

The broadsides of the *Confiance*, however, grew steadily less effective. Her guns had been levelled to point-blank range at first, but the quoins were loosened by the successive broadsides, and, as they

were not properly replaced, her shot kept going higher and higher so as to pass over the enemy. Very soon after the beginning of the action the gallant Downie was slain, a shot from the *Saratoga* throwing one of the long 24's off its carriage against his right groin. His death was instantaneous, though the skin was not broken.

No ships could bear the brunt of such a battle without suffering. After a few minutes, the fire from both the *Confiance* and the *Saratoga* began to decrease. One by one the guns were disabled, and the lack of complete training among the crews showed itself in the way in which each side helped to disable its own battery. The American sailors overloaded their carronades, cramming their guns until the last shot reached the muzzle. The British on board the *Confiance* made an even worse showing. They became demoralised by the confusion and slaughter, and spoiled one or two of the guns by ramming the wadding and round shot into them without any powder, or by putting in two cartridges of powder and no shot. When, however, the *Linnet* was able to devote herself exclusively to the *Saratoga*, the latter began to get rather more than she wanted. Macdonough had his hands full, with the frigate on his beam, and the brig raking him. Twice the *Saratoga* was set on fire by the hot shot of the *Confiance;* one by one her long-guns were disabled by the enemy's fire; and her carronades either suffered from the same cause, or else were

rendered useless by overcharging. At last only one carronade was left in the starboard battery; and on firing it the gun flew off the carriage and fell down the main hatch. This left the *Saratoga* without a single gun which she could fire, and, though the *Confiance* had been almost as roughly handled, the British ship still had a few port guns that could be used. On both sides the unengaged batteries, the starboard battery of the *Confiance* and the port battery of the *Saratoga*, were practically unharmed.

The British victory would now have been secure had not Macdonough provided in advance the means for meeting just such an emergency.

The anchor suspended astern of the *Saratoga* was let go, and the men hauled in on the hawser that led to the starboard quarter, bringing the ship's stern up over the kedge. The ship then rode by the kedge, and by a hawser that had been bent to a bight in the stream cable. In that position she was exposed to a raking fire from the *Linnet*, and suffered much from the accuracy of Pring's long 12's. By hauling on the line, however, the ship was at length got so far round that the aftermost gun of the port broadside bore on the *Confiance*. The men had been sent forward to keep them as much out of harm's way as possible. Enough were now called back to man the piece, and they at once began a brisk and accurate fire. Again the crew roused on the line until the next gun bore, and it, too, was manned, and opened with effect on the

Confiance. Then the ship hung, and would go no farther round. But Macdonough was not at the end of his resources. The hawser leading from the port quarter was got forward under the bows, and passed aft to the starboard quarter. The *Saratoga* gradually yielded to the strain, and, a minute later, her whole port battery opened with fatal effect. The *Confiance*, meanwhile, had also attempted to round. The springs of the British ships were on the starboard side, and so, of course, could not be shot away as the *Eagle's* were; but as the *Confiance* had nothing but springs to rely on, her efforts did little beyond forcing her forward; and she hung with her head to the wind. She could not stand the pounding of the fresh battery. Over half her crew were killed or wounded; all but three or four of the guns on the engaged side were dismounted; her stout masts looked like bundles of splinters; and her sails were in shreds and tatters. Nothing more could be done, and the *Confiance* struck about two hours after she had fired her first broadside. Without pausing a minute the *Saratoga* again hauled on her starboard hawser till her broadside was sprung to bear on the *Linnet*, and the ship and brig began a brisk single fight; for the *Eagle*, in her then berth, could not fire at the *Linnet*, and the *Ticonderoga* was driving off the British galleys. The shattered and disabled state of the *Linnet's* masts, sails, and yards rendered it utterly hopeless for Pring to try to escape by cutting his cable; and

most men would have surrendered at once. But Pring kept up a most gallant fight with his greatly superior foe, hoping that some of the gunboats would come and tow him off. Meanwhile he had despatched to the *Confiance* a lieutenant, who returned with news of Downie's death. The British gunboats had been driven half a mile off, and were evidently in no state to render aid to any one; so, after having maintained the fight single-handed for fifteen minutes, until, from the number of shot between wind and water, the lower deck was flooded, the plucky little brig hauled down her colours, and the fight ended a little over two hours and a half after the first gun had been fired. Not one of the American vessels had a mast that would bear canvas, and the captured British vessels were in a sinking condition.

The British row-galleys had drifted to leeward, and they now pulled slowly off. The American row-galleys were in no position to interfere with their retreat, which was not molested.

The battle had been bloody and destructive. The *Confiance* had been struck in the hull one hundred and five, and the *Saratoga* fifty-five times; about two hundred men were killed or wounded on the American side, and over three hundred on the British.[1] This does not include those who were

[1] The *Confiance* had 41 killed and about 60 wounded; the *Linnet*, 10 killed and 14 wounded; the *Chubb*, 6 killed and 16 wounded; and the *Finch*, 2 wounded. There were further losses in the gunboats. — W. L. C.

merely knocked down, or bruised, or grazed by flying splinters; indeed, an officer of the *Confiance* reported that at the close of the action there were not five men in her who were unhurt. Macdonough appreciated the gallantry of his adversaries, and at once returned the British officers their swords; and Pring, the senior British officer left, expressed in his official letter his acknowledgment of the generosity, courtesy, and humanity with which Macdonough had treated himself and his men. Pring, and Cassin of the *Ticonderoga*, shared with Macdonough the honour of the day.

This lake fight decided the fate of the invasion of Sir George Prevost,[1] who retired at once with his army. Macdonough had performed a most notable feat, one which, on the whole, surpassed that of any other captain of either navy in this war. The consequences of the victory were very great, for it had a decisive effect upon the negotiations for peace which were then being carried on between the American and the British commissioners at Ghent. The Duke of Wellington, who had been pressed to take command of the British army in Canada, advised against any prolongation of the war, if it could be terminated on the basis of each nation being left

[1] Prevost's failure to co-operate with the squadron, as he had undertaken to do, was largely responsible for the disaster. Sir James Lucas Yeo preferred certain charges against him in consequence; but Prevost died before he could be brought before a court-martial. See Mems. of C. M. on Pring and others, August 28th, 1815. — W. L. C.

in the position which it had [illegible] struggle, giving this advice on the ground that t[illegible] failure of the British to obtain control of the lakes rendered it impossible to expect any decisive triumph of the British arms.[1] Indeed, in the war of 1812, the control of the lakes was the determining factor in the situation on the Canadian border, for at that time the frontier between the two countries nowhere passed through any thickly-settled regions, except in the immediate neighbourhood of great bodies of water; and the military operations that were undertaken had to be conducted with this condition in view.

[1] Wellington's Dispatches, xii. 224; Supplementary Dispatches, i. 426, and ix. 438. See Adams, viii. 102–112, for this battle, and ix. 36–41, for its effects on the negotiations for peace.

In his letter of November 9th, written after the receipt of the news of the battle of Lake Champlain, Wellington advises the Cabinet that they "have no right, from the state of the war, to demand any concession of territory from America," and gives as the main reason, "the want of the naval superiority on the lakes."

THE BLOCKADE AND THE CRUISERS

DESTRUCTION of Barney's gunboats — Capture of Washington — Gordon at Alexandria — Repulse at Baltimore — Lockyer in Lake Borgne — Repulse at Fort Bowyer — The case of the *Erebus* — Increase of American privateering — The *Chasseur*, of Baltimore — British indignation — Capture of the *St. Lawrence* — The *General Armstrong* — The *Prince de Neufchâtel* — Capture of the *Frolic* — The *Peacock* and the *Épervier* — The *Wasp* and the *Reindeer* — The *Wasp* and the *Avon* — Loss of the *Wasp* — The *Endymion* and the *President* — Capture of the *Levant* and *Cyane* — Escape of the *Constitution* — The *Hornet* and the *Penguin* — Escape of the *Hornet* — The *Peacock* and the *Nautilus* — End of the war — Novel weapons in the American navy — A drawn quarrel.

THE inability of America in any way to interrupt the British blockade of her coast was now to bear fruit in the disgrace of the loss of the national capital. Of course, so long as the British possessed absolute control of the sea, they could take the offensive whenever and wherever they wished, and could choose their own point of attack, while the American government never knew what point to defend. From Maryland to Georgia the militia were under arms literally by the hundred thousand, and they were less efficient than one-tenth the number of regulars. While in the field they suffered greatly from disease, so that there was much loss of life, although there was hardly any fighting; and on the few occasions when it was possible to

gather them soon enough to oppose them to a British raiding party, they naturally showed themselves utterly incompetent to stand against trained regulars. The loss of life and the waste of wealth by the employment of these militia in the southern states, though they were hardly ever used in battle, offset many times over the expense that would have been incurred by building a fighting fleet sufficient to prevent a blockade, and therefore to obviate all the damage which it cost during the two years when it was in force — damage which the privateers only partially avenged, and in no way averted.

Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander F. I. Cochrane had succeeded to the command of the British fleet on the coast of North America in the summer of 1814. Rear-Admiral George Cockburn was in command in the Chesapeake, whither Cochrane himself sailed in August, together with a fleet of transports containing a small British army under Major-General Robert Ross. At about the same time Cochrane had issued a general order to the British blockading squadrons, instructing them to destroy and lay waste the towns and districts which they could successfully assail, sparing only the lives of the unarmed inhabitants. This was done in alleged retaliation for the conduct of a party of American soldiers on the Canadian boundary, who had wantonly destroyed the little town of Newark; although the destruction of Newark had been promptly avenged by the de-

struction of Buffalo and one or two other small American towns, while the officer who had ordered Newark to be destroyed had been court-martialled for his conduct. A curious feature of Cochrane's order, which was of course, grossly improper, was that it applied only to the Navy; and Ross showed by his actions how strongly he disapproved of it, for though the Navy did a great deal of plundering and burning, in accordance with the instructions given, Ross's troops at first paid scrupulous heed to the rights of the citizens, and in no way interfered with private property.[1]

The first duty of the fleet was to get rid of Captain Joshua Barney's flotilla of gunboats. This flotilla had indulged in several indecisive long-range skirmishes with various ships of the blockading squadron, and it was now forced to put into the Patuxent, where it was burned when Ross advanced on Washington. Barney's flotilla-men then joined the motley forces gathered to defend the capital city, and offered a striking contrast in their behaviour on the field of battle to the rabble of militia around them, who fled while the sailors fought.[2]

About the middle of August Cochrane and Ross were ready for action. On the 20th Ross's troops were disembarked on the Maryland shore, some fifty miles distant from Washington; Cockburn proceeded

[1] Adams, viii. 126.

[2] 'Biographical Memoir of the late Commodore Joshua Barney,' p. 315.

up the Patuxent[1] on the Maryland side. On the 23rd they definitely made up their minds to attack Washington first and Baltimore later. Meanwhile a British squadron, composed of the frigates *Seahorse*, 38, Captain James Alexander Gordon (1), and *Euryalus*, 36, Captain Charles Napier (2), with four bombs and rocket ships, moved up the Potomac. In addition Captain Sir Peter Parker (2), in the *Menelaus*, 38, was sent to create a diversion above Baltimore; but he happened to meet a party of militia, who fought well, for when he landed at Bellair to attack them, on August 30th, he was himself killed and his party beaten back, with a loss of forty-one men.[2]

[1] Rear-Admiral Cockburn had under his orders the armed boats and tenders of the fleet, having on board Royal Marines under Capt. John Robyns, and Royal Marine Artillery under Captain James H. Harrison. The boats were under the general superintendence of Captain John Wainwright (2), of the *Tonnant*, and were in three divisions, commanded as follows: I. Commanders Thomas Ball Sulivan and William Stanhope Badcock; II. Commanders Rowland Money and Kenelm Somerville; III. Commander Robert Ramsay. Following the boats, so far as the depth of water permitted, were the *Severn*, 40, Captain Joseph Nourse, *Hebrus*, 42, Captain Edmund Palmer, and *Manly*, 12, Commander Vincent Newton; but the frigates could not get higher than Benedict, whence their Captains, with their boats, proceeded to join Cockburn. — W. L. C.

[2] Sir Peter Parker (2), Bart., was eldest son of Vice-Admiral Christopher Parker (2), and was born in 1786. He was a Captain of October 22nd, 1805, and, in 1811, had succeeded to the Baronetcy of his grandfather, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Peter Parker (1). In the affair at Bellair, near Baltimore, 14 British were killed, including, besides Parker, Midshipman John T. Sandes; and 27 were wounded, including Lieutenants Benjamin George Benyon and George Poe, R.M. — W. L. C.

Ross and Cockburn moved against Washington, and, on August 24th, encountered a huddle of seven thousand American militia at Bladensburg. It could not be called an army. A few companies were in uniform. The rest were clad as they would have been clad in the fields, except that they had muskets. They were under two or three worthless generals, one named Winder being in supreme command; and various members of the cabinet, notably Monroe, accompanied President Madison in riding or driving aimlessly about among the troops. Not a third of Ross's little army was engaged,[1] for the militia fled too quickly to allow the main body of the assailants to get into action. As they were running off the field, however, Barney appeared, with his sailors from the flotilla, also on the run, but in the opposite direction. He had with him about four hundred and fifty seamen and marines, the latter being under their own officer, Captain Miller; and he also had a battery of five guns. It was a sufficiently trying situation, for Barney's force was hopelessly outnumbered by the victorious troops whose attack he was advancing to meet through a throng of fugitive militia; but the sailors and marines were of excellent stuff, and were as little daunted by the flight of

[1] In the action at Bladensburg the British army lost 64 killed and 185 wounded. The Navy lost only 1 killed and 6 wounded. Among the naval officers present were Rear-Admiral George Cockburn, Captain Edmund Palmer, Lieutenant James Scott (2), of the *Albion*, Midshipman Arthur Wakefield, Lieutenant John Lawrence, R.M.A., and Lieutenant Athelstan Stephens, R.M. — W. L. C.

their friends as by the advance of their foes. Again and again the sailors repulsed the troops who attacked them in front. They were then outflanked, and retired, after half an hour's fighting, a hundred of their men having been killed or wounded. Both Barney and Miller were wounded and captured, together with the guns. One of the British officers, writing afterwards of the battle, spoke with the utmost admiration of Barney's men. "Not only did they serve their guns with a quickness and precision that astonished their assailants, but they stood till some of them were actually bayoneted with fuses in their hands; nor was it till their leader was wounded and taken, and they saw themselves deserted on all sides by the soldiers, that they left the field." [1] The victorious British showed every attention to Barney and his men, treating them, as Barney said, "as if they were brothers." [2]

As Ross and Cockburn led their troops into Washington they were fired on from a house, Ross's horse being killed. They then proceeded to burn the Capitol and the White House, together with various other public buildings.[3] Next day the work of destruction was completed,[4] a few private buildings

[1] Gleig's 'Subaltern,' p. 68.

[2] Barney's report, Aug. 29th, 1814.

[3] Letters of Cockburn, Aug. 27th, and Ross, Aug. 30th; Ingersoll, ii. 188; James's 'Military Occurrences,' ii. 495; Am. State Papers, Military Affairs, i. 550; Niles, September 1814.

[4] The Americans themselves destroyed the *Argus*, 22, and a frigate which was nearly ready for launching, in order to save them from capture. — W. L. C.

sharing the same fate, while Cockburn took particular pleasure in destroying one of the newspaper offices, as he seemed much to resent the criticism of himself in the American press. Having completed their work, Ross and Cockburn marched back to the coast, leaving behind them most of their wounded to be cared for by the Americans.

Whatever discredit attached to the burning and plundering of Washington attached to both Ross and Cockburn, though Ross evidently disliked the work as much as Cockburn enjoyed it. It was only an incident in the general destruction undertaken by Cochrane's orders. Washington was burned just as, along the shores of the Chesapeake, hamlets and private houses were burned. The pretext was that this was done to avenge the destruction of the public buildings at York, and of the town of Newark, in the American descents upon Canada. The public buildings at York, however, were but partially destroyed by stragglers, whose work was at once checked by the American officers in command. The burning of Newark had been promptly repudiated by the American government, and, moreover, had already been amply avenged. The destruction of the public buildings at Washington was indefensible; and it was also very unwise so deeply to touch the national pride. The affair had a perceptible effect in making the country more determined to carry on the war. It is, however, nonsense to denounce the act in the language that has so often been applied

to it. Cockburn and Ross undoubtedly treated the capital of the American nation in a way which justified an eager desire for revenge; but Americans should keep the full weight of their indignation for the government whose supineness and shortsightedness rendered such an outrage possible. Jomini has left on record the contemptuous surprise felt by all European military men when a state, with a population of eight million souls, allowed a handful of British soldiers to penetrate unchecked to its capital, and there destroy the public buildings. The first duty of a nation is self-defence; and nothing excuses such lack of warlike readiness as the Americans had shown. The incidents which accompanied the capture of Washington were discreditable to the British, but the capture itself was far more discreditable to the Americans.

Meanwhile Captain Gordon's little squadron[1] worked its way up the Potomac, and, on August 28th, took Alexandria, where it remained for four days, loading the vessels with whatever the warehouses contained.[2] Then the squadron began its descent of the river, which was shoal, and very

[1] *Seahorse*, 38, Captain James Alexander Gordon; *Euryalus*, 36, Captain Charles Napier (2); *Devastation*, bomb, Commander Thomas Alexander (2); *Ætna*, bomb, Commander Richard Kenah; *Meteor*, bomb, Commander Samuel Roberts; *Erebus*, rocket-vessel, Commander David Ewen Bartholomew; *Fairy*, 18, Commander Henry Loraine Baker (joined with orders, after the fall of Alexandria); and *Anna Maria*, dispatch-boat. — W. L. C.

[2] Letter of Captain Gordon, Sept. 9th, 1814.

difficult to navigate. Captain John Rodgers, with some of the crews of two new 44's which were building, tried to bar his way, but lacked sufficient means. Twice Rodgers attempted to destroy one of the British vessels with fire-ships, but failed, and once, in his turn, he repelled an attack by the British boats. The squadron also passed, without much damage, a battery of light field-pieces. On September 6th Gordon silenced and passed the last of the batteries, having taken six days to go down from Alexandria. He had lost forty-two men[1] all told, and had thus concluded successfully, at a very trivial cost, a most venturesome expedition, which reflected great honour on the crews engaged in it.

The very rough handling received by Sir Peter Parker (2) put a check to the marauding of the British frigates and sloops. As soon as Gordon rejoined him Cochrane sailed from the mouth of the Potomac to the mouth of the Patapsco River, on which Baltimore stands. Formidable earthworks had been thrown up about Baltimore, however; and to guard it against attack by sea there were good forts, which were well manned by men who had at last begun to learn something. Ross advanced against the city by land, and was killed in a sharp encounter with a body of militia. The

[1] *Viz.*, 7 killed, including Lieutenant Charles Dickinson (*Fairy*), and 35 wounded, including Captain Charles Napier (2), Commander David Ewen Bartholomew, Lieutenant Reuben Paine, and Master's Mate Andrew Reid. — W. L. C.

troops found the earthworks too strong to assault; the ships bombarded the forts without any effect; and then both the soldiers and the sailors [1] retired.[2] Not long afterwards Cochrane left for Halifax,[3] and the British troops for Jamaica, so that operations in the Chesapeake ceased.

During this time the British Navy had protected an expedition which overran, and held until the close of the war, a part of the Maine sea-coast, and in September, 1814, a large British force, under Rear-Admiral Edward Griffith, destroyed the American corvette *Adams*, 28, which had run up the Penobscot for refuge.

After leaving Baltimore the British prepared for a descent on New Orleans, and gathered a large fleet of line-of-battle ships, frigates, and small vessels, under Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander F. I. Cochrane, convoying a still larger number of store-

[1] In the attack on Baltimore, the 600 seamen who were landed were under Captain Edward Crofton, and Commanders Thomas Ball Sulivan, Rowland Money, and Robert Ramsay, and the Royal Marines under Captain John Robyns. In the affair of September 12th, when Major-General Ross fell, the Navy lost 7 killed and 48 wounded, among the latter being Captain John Robyns, R.M., Lieutenant Sampson Marshall, and Midshipman Charles Ogle (2). During a subsequent expedition up the Coan River, on October 3rd, Commander Richard Kenah, of the *Ætna*, was killed. — W. L. C.

[2] Cochrane's report, Sept. 17th, 1814.

[3] Cochrane sailed for Halifax on September 19th to make preparations for the New Orleans expedition. On the same day Rear-Admiral Cockburn departed for Bermuda; and on October 14th, Rear-Admiral Pulteney Malcolm quitted the Chesapeake for Negril Bay, Jamaica. — W. L. C.

ships and transports, containing the troops under Major-General Sir Edward Pakenham. The expedition made its appearance at the mouth of the Mississippi on December 8th. The first duty which fell to the boats of the squadron was to destroy five American gunboats which lay in the shallow bayou known as Lake Borgne. Accordingly, forty-two launches, each armed with a carronade in the bow, and carrying nine hundred and eighty seamen and Royal Marines all told, were sent off, under Commander Nicholas Lockyer,[1] to effect their destruction. The gunboats carried an aggregate of one hundred and eighty-two men, under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Ap Catesby Jones, U.S.N. Each was armed with one heavy long-gun, and several light pieces.[2] The attack was made on the morning of December 14th, 1814.[3] Jones had moored his five gun-vessels in a head and stern line

[1] Commander Nicholas Lockyer, of the *Sophie*, 18, was assisted by Commanders Henry Montresor, of the *Manly*, and Samuel Roberts, of the *Meteor*, bomb, and each commanded a division of boats. The boats engaged were those of the *Tonnant*, *Norge*, *Bedford*, *Ramillies*, *Royal Oak*, *Armide*, *Seahorse*, *Cydnus*, *Trave*, *Sophie*, *Meteor*, *Belle Poule*, *Gorgon*, *Alceste*, and *Diomede*. A medal for the action was granted in 1847. — W. L. C.

[2] Lieutenant Jones's account gives his full force as 5 gunboats, mounting in all three long 32's, two long 24's, twenty-two long 6's, four 12-pr. carronades, two 5-in. howitzers, and twelve swivels, and having 182 men on board. He had also with him the schooner *Seahorse*, which he detached to Bay St. Louis before the attack, and the little sloop *Alligator*. — W. L. C.

[3] Letters of Captain Lockyer, Dec. 18th, 1814, and of Lieutenant Jones, March 12, 1815.

in the channel off Malheureux Island passage, with their boarding nettings triced up, and everything in readiness; but the force of the current drifted his own boat and another out of line, a hundred yards down. Jones had to deal with a force five times the size of his own, and to escape he had only to run his boats on shore; but he prepared very coolly for battle.

Commander Lockyer acted as coolly as his antagonist. When he had reached a point just out of gunshot, he brought the boats to a grapnel, to let the sailors eat breakfast and get a little rest, for they had been rowing most of the time for a day and a night, and a cutting out expedition meant murderous work. When the men were refreshed he formed the boats in open order, and they pulled gallantly on against the strong current. At ten minutes past eleven the Americans opened fire, and, for a quarter of an hour, had the firing all to themselves. Then the carronades and light guns on both sides were brought into play. Lockyer led the advance in a barge of the *Seahorse*. The nearest gunboat was that of the American commander. Accordingly, it was these two who first came to close quarters, Lockyer laying his barge alongside Lieutenant Jones's boat. An obstinate struggle ensued, but the resistance of the Americans was very fierce, and the barge was repulsed, most of her crew being killed or crippled, while her gallant captain was severely, and the equally gallant

Lieutenant George Pratt mortally, wounded. Another boat, under the command of Lieutenant James Barnwell Tatnall, grappled the gunboat and was promptly sunk. But the other boats pulled steadily up, and, one after another, were laid on board the doomed vessel. The boarding-nets were slashed through and cut away; with furious fighting the deck was gained; the American commander and many of his crew were killed or wounded, and the gunboat was carried. Her guns were turned on the second boat, which was soon taken, and then the British dashed at the third, which was carried with a rush after a gallant defence, her commander, Lieutenant Robert Spedden, being badly wounded. The next gunboat fell an easy prey, her long-gun having been dismounted by the recoil, and the fifth then hauled down her flag. Forty-one of the Americans, and ninety-four of the British,[1] were killed or wounded.

A brigade of British sailors took part in the battles before New Orleans, and shared the disasters that there befell the British army; but their deeds belong to military rather than to naval history.

[1] The British lost 17 killed and 77 wounded, out of a total of about 980 engaged. Among the killed were Midshipmen Thomas W. Moore, John Mills, and Henry Symons; among the wounded were Commander Nicholas Lockyer, Lieutenants William Gilbert Roberts, John Franklin, Henry Gladwell Etough, and George Pratt (mortally), and Lieutenant James Uniacke, R.M. For the gallantry displayed, Commander Lockyer was posted on March 29th, 1815, and Commanders Henry Montresor and Samuel Roberts were similarly advanced on June 13th following. — W. L. C.

The British navy did not confine itself to attacks in Chesapeake Bay and at the mouth of the Mississippi. On September 15th, 1814, the *Hermes*, 20, Captain the Hon. Henry William Percy, *Carron*, 20, Captain the Hon. Robert Churchill Spencer, and 18-gun brig-sloops *Sophie*, Commander Nicholas Lockyer, and *Childers*, Commander John Brand Umfreville, with a land force of about two hundred men, made an attack on Fort Bowyer, at Mobile Point.[1] The attack failed completely. The carronades of the ships were unfit for such a contest, and no damage was done to the fort, while the *Hermes* grounded and was burnt, and the assailants were repulsed, losing about eighty men all told.

Early in 1815 Rear-Admiral George Cockburn began to harry the coast of Georgia. He gathered a great deal of plunder, and did much destruction in an expedition up the St. Mary's River. As usual, the militia were helpless to impede his movements or relieve the threatened points. One or two of his boat attacks failed; and the small force of American seamen which manned the little flotilla of gunboats in the shallow waters of the South Atlantic twice themselves made cutting-out expeditions, in which they captured two boats of one of his frigates, the *Hebrus*, and the tender of another, the *Severn*.[2] These little checks, however, were merely sufficient to irritate the British; and Savannah was in an

[1] James, vi. 356 (ed. 1837).

[2] Navy Dept. MSS., Captains' Letters, vol. 42, Nos. 100 and 130.

agony of well-grounded fear lest she should suffer the fate of Washington, when peace came, and Cockburn reluctantly withdrew. A disagreeable incident occurred after the news of peace had come. The British 20-gun sloop *Erebus*, Commander David Ewen Bartholomew, came across an American gunboat, under the command of Mr. Hurlburt, and ordered her to lie to. The gunboat refused, whereupon the sloop gave her a broadside, and she fired her only gun, and struck.[1] Afterwards Bartholomew apologised, and let the gunboat proceed. His gunnery had been bad, and none of the gunboat's crew were hurt. A few months later, on June 30th, 1815, a parallel incident, with the parties reversed, occurred in the China Seas, where the American sloop *Peacock*, 22, met the little East India Company's brig *Nautilus*, 14.[2] The meeting will be described later.

Thus, throughout the last year of the war, the American coast had been blockaded, and harassed, and insulted by harrying parties, as well as by descents in force, from the St. John's to the Mississippi. Virginia, Maryland, Maine, and Georgia had been equally powerless to repel or avenge the attacks from which they had suffered. Alexandria had been plundered and Hampton burned, the

[1] Navy Dept. MSS., Captains' Letters, vol. 43, No. 125. *Niles's Register*, viii. 104, 118.

[2] The *Nautilus*, however, fared worse than Mr. Hurlburt's gunboat, for she lost 6 killed, and 9, including her commander, Lieutenant Charles Boyce, wounded. — W. L. C.

Georgia coast ravaged and part of Maine permanently held; and only at the mouth of the Mississippi — and there, thanks solely to the genius of Andrew Jackson — had the invaders met a bloody and crushing defeat. Moreover, the blockade was so vigorous that the shipping rotted at the wharves of the seaports, and grass grew in the business quarters of the trading towns. Of course very swift and very lucky merchant vessels now and then got in or out, but they had to charge for their wares prices that would repay the great risk of capture; and, for an impoverished people, those prices were nearly prohibitory. The general suffering was very great, and the people, instead of realising that their own shortcomings were at fault, stormed at the administration — with very good reason, it must be confessed. The war had really done a great service; but this the people, naturally enough, failed to recognise at the moment; and the discomfort and humiliation to which they were subjected made them long for peace. For eight months the overthrow of Napoleon had left Great Britain free to put her whole strength against the United States. The result had by no means come up to her expectations, for her aggressive movements, at Plattsburg Bay and at New Orleans, had met with defeat. But the ceaseless pressure of the blockade told heavily in her favour. Every American citizen felt in his pocket and on his table the results of the presence of the British warships off the harbour mouths.

No stringency of the blockade, however, could keep the American cruisers in port. The sloops of war and the big privateers were commanded and manned by men whose trade it was to run risks and overcome dangers. Daringly and skilfully handled, they continually ran in and out of the ports, ever incurring the risk of capture, but ever doing damage for which their capture could not atone.

Thanks to their numbers, and to the fact that they only fought when they had to, the privateers did more damage than the sloops to British commerce. Like the privateers, the sloops cruised, by choice, right in the home waters of Britain, but they never went after merchantmen when there was a chance of tackling men-of-war; and the chief harrying of the British commerce was left to the men who did it for personal reasons, actuated half by love of gain and half by love of adventure.

The deeds of the commerce-destroyers in this war are very noteworthy. In spite of the fact that the stringency of the blockade of the American coast increased steadily, and of the further fact that, during the latter part of the war, the British were able to employ their whole Navy against the Americans, the ravages of the American cruisers grew more and more formidable month by month until the peace. The privateers were handled with a daring and success previously unknown. Always before this, in any contest with a European power, the British Navy had in the end been able to get

the hostile privateers completely under, and to prevent any large portion of British trade from being driven into neutral bottoms. France possessed treble the population of the United States, and she had a great fighting fleet; while her harbours were so near the English coast as to offer an excellent base of operations against British commerce. But, when the American war broke out, Britain had very nearly driven the French privateers from the ocean, and had almost entirely expelled them from British home waters. The result was that, in 1812, British commerce was safer at sea than it had been during the early period of the French war. But nothing of the kind happened in the American war. The boldness of the privateers, and the severity of their ravages, increased every year. In 1814 the privateers that put to sea were large, well-built, formidably armed, and heavily-manned vessels, of about the size of the smaller sloops of war, and faster than any other craft afloat. England was near to continental Europe, and America was divided from her by the broad Atlantic; yet no European nation ever sent her privateers so boldly into British home waters as did America.

Wherever on the ocean the British merchantmen sailed, thither the American privateers followed. Their keels furrowed the waters of the Indian Ocean and the China Seas; and they made prizes of vessels that sailed from Bombay, Madras, and Hong Kong. They swarmed in the West Indies,

where they landed and burnt small towns, leaving behind them proclamations that thus they had avenged the burning of Washington. They haunted the coasts of the British colonies in Africa; they lay off the harbour of Halifax, and plundered the outgoing and incoming vessels, laughing at the ships of the line and frigates that strove to drive them off. Above all they grew ever fonder of sailing to and fro in the narrow seas over which England had for centuries claimed an unquestioned sovereignty. They cruised in the British Channel, where they captured, not only merchantmen, but also small regularly armed vessels. The Irish Sea and the Irish Channel were among their favourite cruising grounds; they circled Scotland and Ireland; one of them ransomed a Scottish town. The *Chasseur* of Baltimore, commanded by Thomas Boyle cruised for three months off the coast of England, taking prize after prize, and in derision sent in, to be posted at Lloyd's, a proclamation of blockade of the sea-coast of the United Kingdom.[1] In September 1814 the merchants of Glasgow, Liverpool, and Bristol held meetings, and complained bitterly to the British Government of the damages inflicted upon them. The Liverpool meeting recited that some ports, particularly Milford, were under actual blockade. The merchants, manufacturers, shipowners, and underwriters of Glasgow protested that the audacity of the American privateers had become

[1] Coggeshall's book is filled with incidents of this kind.

intolerable; that they harassed the British coasts; and that the success with which their enterprise had been attended was not only injurious to British commerce, but also humbling to British pride; and they added a significant comment upon the damage which had been done by "a Power whose maritime strength had hitherto been impolitically held in contempt." The rates of insurance rose to an unprecedented height. For the first time in history a rate of 13 per cent. was paid on risks to cross the Irish Channel. The Secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Croker, was forced to admit the havoc wrought even in the Irish and Bristol Channels, and could only respond that, if the merchantmen would never sail except under the convoy of a sufficient number of men-of-war, they would be safe. Such a statement was equivalent to admission that no unguarded ship could safely go from one British port to another; and it sufficed to explain why the rate of insurance on vessels had gradually risen to double the rate which had prevailed during the great war with France.[1] On February 11th, 1815, the *Times* complained in these bitter words of the ravages of the American sloops of war and privateers: "They daily enter in among our convoys, seize prizes in sight of those that should afford protection, and if pursued 'put on their sea-wings' and laugh at the clumsy English pursuers. To what is this owing? Cannot we build ships? . . . It must indeed be

[1] Adams, viii. 200.

encouraging to Mr. Madison to read the logs of his cruisers. If they fight, they are sure to conquer; if they fly, they are sure to escape."

The privateers were not fitted to fight regular war-vessels. As a rule they rarely made the effort. When they did they sometimes betrayed the faults common to all irregular fighting men. Many instances could be cited where they ran away from, submitted tamely to, or made but a weak defence against, equal or even inferior forces. But such was by no means always the case. Exceptionally good commanders were able to get their crews into a condition when they were formidable foes to any man-of-war of their weight in the world; for, though naturally the discipline of a privateer was generally slack, yet the men who shipped on board her were sure to be skilful seamen, and trained to the use of arms, so that, with a little drilling, they made good fighting stuff. The larger privateers several times captured little British national vessels, cutters and the like. On February 26th, 1815, the famous Baltimore schooner *Chasseur*, of fourteen guns and seventy men, under Thomas Boyle, captured in fair fight the British war-schooner *St. Lawrence*, Lieutenant Henry Cranmer Gordon,[1]

[1] The *St. Lawrence* mounted twelve 12-pr. carronades and one long 9, and had, according to James (vi. 370, ed. 1837), 51 men and boys, besides passengers, on board. She lost 6 killed and 18 wounded. The *Chasseur* mounted eight 18-pr. carronades and six long 9's. James, without specifying his authority, says that she lost 5 killed and 8 wounded, out of a complement of 115. O'Byrne

of almost exactly the same force, after an obstinate action.[1]

Some of the bloodiest engagements of the war were between British cutting-out parties and privateers. The two most notable cases were those in which the two famous New York privateers, the *Prince de Neufchâtel* and the *General Armstrong* were the chief figures. Both were large swift vessels. The latter was a brig and the former a brigantine, and both had committed exceptionally severe ravages on British commerce, having been unusually lucky in the prizes they had made. As with all of these privateers, it is difficult to get at full particulars of them, and in some accounts, both are called schooners. The *General Armstrong* was armed with one heavy long-gun and eight long 9's. The *Prince de Neufchâtel* carried 17 guns, 9's and 12's, being the larger vessel of the two.

On the 26th of September, 1814, the *General Armstrong* was lying at anchor in the road of Fayal. Her master was Samuel Chester Reid,[2] and she had a crew of ninety men on board. A British squadron

(408), in his notice of Lieutenant H. C. Gordon, entirely ignores the affair, and says that Gordon, after receiving his first commission, on February 4th, 1815, never served again. I cannot find any official report of the action. — W. L. C.

[1] Letter of Boyle, March 2nd, 1815.

[2] His father, while serving in the British Navy, had been made prisoner by the Americans, whose cause he had subsequently joined. He had in the meantime married a colonial lady, Rebecca Chester. The son, born in 1783, survived until 1861. He was originally in the U. S. Navy. — W. L. C.

composed of the *Plantagenet*, 74, Captain Robert Lloyd (2); *Rota*, 38, Captain Philip Somerville (1); and *Carnation*, 18, Commander George Bentham, hove in sight towards sundown. Experience had taught the Americans not to trust to the neutrality of a weak Power for protection; and Reid warped his brig near shore, and made ready to repel any attempt to cut her out. Soon after dark, Captain Lloyd sent in four boats. He asserted that they were only sent to find out what the strange brig was; but of course no such excuse was tenable. Four boats, filled with armed men, would not approach a strange vessel after nightfall merely to reconnoitre her. At any rate, after repeatedly warning them off, Reid fired in to them, and they withdrew. He then anchored, with springs on his cables, nearer shore, and made every preparation for the desperate struggle which he knew awaited him. Lloyd did not keep him long in suspense. Angered at the check he had received, he ordered seven boats of the squadron manned by about a hundred and eighty picked men, to attack the privateer. He intended the *Carnation* to accompany them, to take part in the attack; but the winds proved too light and baffling, and the boats made the attempt alone. Under the command of Lieutenant William Matterface, first of the *Rota*, they pulled in under cover of a small reef of rocks, where they lay for some time; and, at about midnight, they advanced to the attack. The Americans were on the alert, and, as soon as

they saw the boats rowing in through the night, they opened with the pivot-gun, and immediately afterwards with their long 9's. The British replied with their boat carronades, and, pulling spiritedly on amidst a terrific fire from both sides, laid the schooner aboard on her bow and starboard quarter. A murderous struggle followed. The men-of-war's men slashed at the nettings and tried to clamber up on the decks, while the privateersmen shot down the assailants, hacked at them with cutlass and tomahawk, and thrust them through with their long pikes. The boats on the quarter were driven off; but on the forecastle the British cut away the nettings, and gained the deck. All three of the American mates were killed or disabled, and their men were beaten back; but Reid went forward on the run, with the men of the after division, and tumbled the boarders back into their boats. This put an end to the assault. Two boats were sunk, most of the wounded being saved as the shore was so near; two others were captured; and the others, crippled from their losses, and loaded with dead and disabled men, crawled back towards the squadron. The loss of the Americans was slight. Two were killed and seven wounded. The fearful slaughter in the British boats proved that they had done all that the most determined courage could do. Two-thirds of the assailants were killed or wounded.[1]

[1] The number killed was 34, including Lieutenants William Matterface and Charles R. Norman. The number wounded was

The brig's long 24 had been knocked off its carriage by a carronade shot, but it was replaced and the deck again cleared for action. Next day the *Carnation* came in to destroy the privateer, but was driven off by the judicious use of the long-gun. However, as soon as the wind became favourable, the *Carnation* again advanced. Further resistance being hopeless, the *General Armstrong* was scuttled and burned, and the Americans retreated to the land.[1]

The *Prince de Neufchâtel* was attacked on October 11th, 1814. She had made a very successful cruise, and had on board goods to the amount of 300,000 dollars, but had manned and sent in so many prizes that only forty of her crew were left, while thirty-seven prisoners were confined in the hold. At midday on the 11th, while off Nantucket, the British frigate *Endymion*, 40, Captain Henry Hope, discovered her and made sail in chase. Soon after nightfall it fell calm, and the frigate despatched her boats, with one hundred and eleven men, under the command of the first lieutenant, Abel Hawkins, to carry the brigantine by boarding. The latter triced up the boarding nettings, loaded her guns with grape and bullets, and made everything ready

86, including Lieutenant Richard Rawle, Lieutenant Thomas Park, R.M., Purser William Benge Basden, and two midshipmen.—W. L. C.

[1] Letter of Captain S. C. Reid, Oct. 7th, 1814, and of Consul John B. Dabney, Oct. 5th, 1814. James, vi. 349 (ed. 1837). Letter of Captain Lloyd; Adams, viii. 202.

for the encounter. The rapid tide held back the boats as they drew near, but they laid the brigantine aboard, and a most desperate engagement followed. Some of the British actually cut through the nettings and reached the deck, but they were killed by the privateersmen as fast as they mounted. Once the boats were repulsed; again they came on, but again they were beaten back; the launch was captured, and the others pulled back to the frigate. The slaughter had been very heavy, considering the number of combatants. The victorious privateer had lost seventeen killed, and fifteen badly, and nine slightly, wounded, leaving but nine untouched. Of the British, about half were killed or wounded, including among the former Lieutenant Hawkins himself, and, in addition, the launch was taken with the twenty-eight men in her.[1] The master of the *Prince de Neufchâtel* was John Ordronaux, a New Yorker. His name caused the Captain of the *Endymion* to put him down as a Frenchman.

The commerce-destroying exploits of the American cruisers had a very distinct effect in furthering the readiness of the British to come to terms. They helped to make England willing to accept a peace by which neither side lost or gained anything. The great service rendered by the American commerce-destroyers in the war of 1812 must not be blinked; but on the other hand, the lesson it teaches must

[1] Coggeshall's 'History of American Privateers,' 241; James, vi. 362 (ed. 1837).

not be misread. The swift cruisers cut up the British trade terribly, and rendered it unsafe even for the British coasters to go from one port to another; but it cannot be too often insisted that the blockading squadrons of Great Britain almost destroyed both the foreign and the coast commerce of the United States. The commerce-destroyers of America did their part toward making the war of 1812 a draw; but the great fighting fleets of England came near making the war a disastrous defeat for the Americans. The people of the British seaports, especially the merchants and ship-owners, were sorely distressed by the war; but in America whole regions were brought by the blockade into a condition of such discontent with their government that they openly talked treason. Moreover, the privateers, in spite of their ravages, produced no such effect on the contest as the regular vessels of the American navy. The victories of the American warships kept up the heart of the United States as no privateer cruiser, however successful, could keep it up; and Macdonough's triumph on Lake Champlain had more effect on the negotiations for peace than the burning and plundering in the Irish Channel.

The American sloops of war were almost or quite as swift as the privateers, and were formidable fighters to boot. The smaller man-of-war brigs (with the exception of the *Enterprise*) were picked up at different times by British cruisers, being able neither

to run nor to fight. Of the large sloops there were by the spring of 1814 four all told, including the *Hornet*, 20, and the newly built *Wasp*, *Peacock*, and *Frolic*, 22. These vessels were as successful in breaking the blockade as the privateers, and more successful in evading capture; and each of them was a menace, not merely to the British merchantmen, but to all British armed vessels less in force than a heavy corvette or a small frigate. Like the privateers, they cruised by preference on the seas where the British merchantmen and British armed vessels were most numerous, the immediate neighbourhood of the British Islands being a favourite haunt.

The British Admiralty had at least partially solved the problem of meeting the American frigates, by providing that the British frigates, which were usually lighter ships, should cruise in couples or small squadrons, and should avoid encounters with American frigates of superior force; but it made no such provision in the case of the sloops, nor was there any evidence of endeavour to make better the gunnery of the sloops. In consequence, the various sloop actions with which the war closed ended as favourably for the Americans as had the early fights in 1812. The ordinary British sloop was the 18-gun brig. She was not so good a vessel as the American ship-sloop carrying twenty or twenty-two guns. There were corresponding ship-sloops in the British Navy; but no effort was made

to substitute them for the brig-sloops, nor were they so employed as to bring them into contact with the *Wasp*, the *Hornet*, and their fellows. Moreover, the brig-sloops proved on the whole to be far more inferior to their opponents in skill than they were in force. The gunnery of the Americans showed itself to the end much better than the gunnery of the British. The former used sights for their guns, and were trained to try to make each shot tell, while even in Nelson's day, and still more after his death, the British cared more for rapidity of fire than for exactness of aim. They sought to get so close to their antagonists that the shots could not well miss. But a badly aimed gun has infinite capacity for missing, even at close range.

The first of the new American sloops to get to sea was the *Frolic*, 22, so named after the prize captured by the old *Wasp* in 1812. She cruised for a couple of months under Master-Commandant Joseph Bainbridge, and among other deeds, sank a large Carthagenan privateer, nearly a hundred of her crew of Spaniards, West Indians, and the like, being drowned. Finally, on April 20th, 1814, she was captured after a long chase by the British 36-gun frigate *Orpheus*, Captain Hugh Pigot (3), and the 12-gun schooner *Shelburne*, Lieutenant David Hope.[1]

The *Peacock*, 22, Captain Lewis Warrington, sailed from New York on March 12th, 1814. On

[1] The *Frolic* was added to the Royal Navy as the *Florida*. — W. L. C.

April 29th, in latitude 27° 47′ N., longitude 80° 7′ W., he encountered a small convoy of merchantmen under the protection of the British 18-gun brig-sloop *Épervier*, Commander Richard Walter Wales. The *Peacock* had one hundred and sixty-six men in crew, and carried two long 12's and twenty 32-pr. carronades, like the rest of her class. The *Épervier* had one hundred and eighteen in crew, and carried sixteen 32-pr. and two 18-pr. carronades. In broadside force the difference was about five to four. However, Wales hauled up to engage, while the convoy made all sail away.

The *Peacock* came down with the wind nearly aft, while the *Épervier* stood toward her close hauled. At 10.20 A. M. they exchanged broadsides, each using the starboard battery. The *Épervier* then eased away, and the two vessels ran off side by side, the Englishman firing his port guns, while Warrington still used the starboard battery, aiming at the brig's hull. The *Épervier* did practically no damage whatsoever, while she was heavily punished by her adversary. Commander Wales's crew, moreover, showed a lack of courage such as was very unusual in the service, muttering sullenly that the American was too heavy for them. Half an hour after close action had begun, most of the guns on the engaged side of the *Épervier* had been dismounted by the *Peacock's* shot, or owing to defective breeching-bolts, or carelessness in the handling; her hull had been struck forty-five times; her masts were badly

wounded; there were five feet of water in her hold; twenty-three of her men were killed or wounded;[1] and she struck her colours. The *Peacock* had lost but two men, both slightly wounded; and there had been some trifling damage aloft; but her hull was not touched. In other words, the *Épervier* was cut to pieces, and the *Peacock* hardly scratched.[2] Warrington put a prize crew on board the captured brig, and brought her in safety to the United States, though on the way the vessels were chased by two British frigates. These Warrington succeeded in drawing after his own ship, which was very fast, and could, he was sure, outsail his pursuers. The event justified his judgment. The *Peacock* again sailed on June 4th, and cruised in the mouth of the Irish Channel, round the west and northern coast of Ireland, and finally in the Bay of Biscay. She escaped from the frigates that chased her, and captured fourteen merchantmen: a record which could have been equalled by few of the privateers, although the latter devoted themselves entirely to preying on commerce.

The *Wasp*, a sister ship of the *Peacock*, and named in honour of the old *Wasp*, left Portsmouth, Virginia, on May 1st, 1814, under the command of Captain Johnston Blakely, with a very fine crew of

[1] Among the severely wounded was Lieutenant John Hackett. — W. L. C.

[2] James's 'Naval Occurrences,' 243; Navy Dept. MSS., Letters of Warrington April 29th and June 1st; American State Papers, xiv. 427; Memoirs of Admiral Codrington, i. 322.

one hundred and seventy-three men, almost exclusively New Englanders. Her cruise, both because of her signal daring and success, and because of the tragic mystery of her end, became one of the most famous in the annals of the American navy. She slipped through the blockaders and ran right across to the mouth of the English Channel. There she remained for several weeks, burning and scuttling many ships. Finally, on June 28th, in the morning, she made out a sail which proved to be the 18-gun British brig-sloop *Reindeer*, Commander William Manners. The *Reindeer* was armed with 24-pr. carronades and had a crew of one hundred and eighteen, so that Manners knew that he had to do with a foe who was half as heavy again as himself. But in all the British Navy, rich as it was with men who cared but little for odds of size or strength, there was no more gallant or more skilful commander than Manners, nor were there braver or better trained men than those under him. As day broke the *Reindeer* made sail for the *Wasp* with the wind nearly aft. The sky was cloudy and the light breeze barely rippled the sea, so that the vessels stood on almost even keels. All the morning they slowly drew together, each captain striving to get or to keep the water-gage. The afternoon had well begun before the rolling drums beat to quarters, and it was three o'clock when the two sloops came into collision. The *Wasp* was running slowly off with the wind a little forward of the port beam, brailing up

her mizen, while the *Reindeer* closed on her weather quarter with the flying-jib hoisted. When but sixty yards apart the British fired their shifting 12-pr. carronade, loaded with round and grape, into the *Wasp*. This was the only gun in either ship that would bear, and five times it was discharged, before, at twenty-six minutes past three, Captain Blakely, finding that the *Reindeer* was not coming on his beam, put his helm a-lee and luffed up, firing his port guns from aft forward as they bore. A biscuit could have been tossed from one vessel to the other as the two lay abreast. The heavy metal of the American was too much for the *Reindeer*. Manners himself was mortally wounded, and was hit again and again, but he would not leave his post, and continued to cheer and hearten his men. The vessels had come close together; and, putting his helm a-weather, he ran the *Wasp* aboard on her port quarter, and called the boarders forward to try the last desperate chance of a hand to hand conflict. But Blakely fought with the same courage and skill as were shown by his antagonist, and used his greatly superior force to the utmost advantage. As the vessels ground together the men hacked and thrust at one another through the open port holes. The Americans gathered aft to repel boarders, the marines, cutlassmen and pikemen clustering close to the bulwarks, while the topmen kept up a deadly fire. Then through the smoke the British boarders sprang, only to die or to be hurled back on their own decks, while the *Reindeer's*

marines kept answering the American fire. As his men recoiled, Manners, mortally wounded, but, high of heart and unconquerable save by death, sprang, sword in hand, into the rigging to lead them on once more; and they rallied behind him. At that moment a ball from the *Wasp's* main-top crashed through his head, and, with his sword closely grasped in his right hand, he fell back dead on his own deck, while above him the flag for which he had given his life still floated. As he fell Blakely passed the word to board. With wild hurrahs the Americans swarmed over the hammock nettings; the wreck of the British crew was swept away by the rush; and the Captain's Clerk, Mr. Richard Collins, the senior officer left, surrendered the brig just eighteen minutes after the *Wasp* had fired her first broadside. Twenty-six of the *Wasp's* crew and sixty-seven[1] of the *Reindeer's* were killed or wounded.[2]

In neither navy was any ship ever more bravely and more skilfully fought than either the *Wasp* or the *Reindeer*, and the defeated side showed themselves heroes indeed. In courage, seamanship, and gunnery, there was nothing to choose between the

[1] The *Reindeer* lost 25 killed and 42 wounded. Among the killed were Commander Manners and Purser John Thomas Barton; among the wounded, Lieutenant Thomas Chambers, Master's Mate Matthew Mitchell, and Midshipman Henry Hardiman. Manners was a young Commander of February 7th, 1812, and was an excellent and idolised officer. — W. L. C.

[2] Letter of Captain Blakely, July 8th, 1814; Cooper, ii. 287; James, vi. 294 (ed. 1837).

two combatants; and the advantage lay with the nation whose forethought had provided the better ship. In all these naval duels no victorious ship, except the *Shannon*, suffered so heavy a relative loss as the *Reindeer* inflicted on the *Wasp*, and, before accepting defeat, the *Reindeer* herself had suffered more than any other defeated ship, except the *Frolic*.

The *Wasp* burned her prize, and sailed into the French port of Lorient to refit. On August 27th she sailed again, making two prizes in the first three days. On the 1st of September she came upon a convoy of ten sail under the protection of the *Armada*, 74, bound for Gibraltar. Confident in her speed and in the seamanship of the crew, Blakely hovered round the convoy, though chased off again and again by the two-decker, and finally cut off and captured a ship laden with iron and brass cannon, muskets, and other military stores of value. He was then on a cruising ground traversed in every direction by British warships and merchantmen, and on the evening of the same day he made out four sail, of whom it afterwards turned out that three were cruisers, being the British ship-sloop *Tartarus*, 20, and the brig-sloops *Avon*, 18, and *Castilian*, 18. Blakely soon became convinced that three of the four were hostile vessels of war. Nevertheless he determined to engage one of them after nightfall, hoping to sink or capture her before either of her consorts could come to her aid. It was a very bold determination, but it was justified by

the *Wasp's* efficiency as a fighting machine. Blakely had less men in crew than when he fought the *Reindeer*, but, profiting by his experience with the latter, he had taken on board her 12-pr. carronade.

The three British sloops were in chase of an American privateer schooner, while the American sloop in her turn chased them. The privateer outsailed her pursuers, and the latter gradually drew apart until the headmost, the *Castilian*, was nine miles distant from the rearmost, the *Avon*, when, late in the afternoon, the *Wasp* began to approach the latter. The *Avon* was under the command of Commander the Hon. James Arbuthnot. She carried twenty guns, including sixteen 32-pr. carronades, a light shifting carronade, two long guns as bow-chasers, and another light long-gun as stern-chaser. Her crew numbered one hundred and seventeen. The odds against her in point of force were thus far less than in the case of the *Reindeer*, being about what they were against the *Épervier*, or five to four in weight of broadside. As the *Wasp* approached, the *Avon*, not desiring to encounter her single-handed, began signalling with her lanterns to her consorts ahead, and when she met with no response she fired signal shots to them.[1]

Soon after 9 P.M. the *Wasp*, steering free through the darkness, got on the weather quarter of the *Avon*, and the vessels exchanged hails. The action

[1] According to some British accounts, the night-signals and the shots were directed to the *Wasp*. James, 297 [ed. 1837]. — W. L. C.

began by the *Wasp* firing her 12-pr. carronade, and the *Avon* responding, first with her stern-chaser, and then with her aftermost port guns. Blakely put his helm up lest his adversary should try to escape, ran to leeward of her, fired his port broadside into her quarter, and then ranged up on her starboard beam.[1] A furious night fight followed at very short range. The *Wasp's* men did not know the name of their antagonist, but her black hull loomed clearly through the night, and aloft in her tops the clustered forms of her sailors could be seen against the sky. Four round shot struck the *Wasp's* hull, killing two men; and another man was wounded by a wad. This was all she suffered below, but aloft her rigging was a good deal cut, for the practice of the *Avon* was bad, her guns being pointed too high. The *Wasp's* fire, on the contrary, was directed with deadly precision. The *Avon's* hull was riddled through and through, until there were seven feet of water in the hold, the lower masts were wounded, and the standing and running rigging were cut to pieces. Five of the starboard guns were dismounted, and forty-two of the crew killed or wounded.[2] Less than three quarters of an hour[3] after the beginning of the action she struck her colours.

[1] Blakely's letter, Sept. 8th, 1814.

[2] The number killed was 10, including Lieutenant John Prendergast; the number wounded was 32, including Commander Arbuthnot, Lieutenant John Harvey (4), and Midshipman John Travers. — W. L. C.

[3] According to the British accounts, the action began at 9.26 P. M.,

While Blakely was lowering away the boat to take possession, the *Castilian*, Commander George Lloyd (actg.), made her appearance, and soon afterwards the *Tartarus* also approached.[1] They had been recalled by the noise of the cannonade, and had come up under a press of sail. When the *Castilian* came in sight Blakely again called his men to quarters, and made ready for battle; but the appearance of the *Tartarus* forced him to relinquish the idea of fighting. Accordingly, the braces having been cut away, the *Wasp* was put before the wind until new ones could be rove. The *Castilian* followed her, but the *Avon* had begun to fire minute-guns and make signals of distress, and Commander Lloyd deemed it his duty to put back to her assistance. He accordingly returned to his consort, after firing his lee guns over the weather quarter of the *Wasp*, cutting her rigging slightly, but not touching a man, nor doing any other damage. He consoled himself by reporting that if he had been able to attack the *Wasp* she would have "fallen an easy prey" to him, and that he did not doubt that his broadside was "most destructive."[2] The *Avon* sank soon afterwards.

James comments on this action as follows: "The gallantry of the *Avon's* crew cannot for a moment

and the *Avon* surrendered at 10.12 P.M.; but James (vi. 298, ed. 1837) shows grounds for believing that the surrender occurred at nearly 11 P. M. — W. L. C.

[1] *Niles's Register*, vi. 216.

[2] Letter of Lloyd, Sept. 2nd, 1814; Adams, viii. 190.

be questioned, but the gunnery of the latter appears to have been not a whit better than, to the discredit of the British Navy, had frequently before been displayed in combats of this kind. Nor, from the specimen given by the *Castilian*, is it likely that she would have performed any better."[1] As for the *Wasp*, she had performed a most notable feat of cool daring and skilful prowess.

She next cruised southward and westward, taking and scuttling or sending in several prizes, one of much value. On October 9th she spoke the Swedish brig *Adonis*, which had on board a couple of the officers formerly of the *Essex*, on their way to England from Brazil. This was the last that was heard of the gallant *Wasp*. How she perished none ever knew. All that is certain is that she was never seen again. In all the navies of the world at that time there were no better sloop and no braver or better captain and crew.

The blockading squadrons watched with special vigilance the harbours containing American frigates. Three frigates cruised off Boston, where the *Constitution* lay, and four off New York, where Decatur kept the *President* ready to put to sea at the first opportunity. The *Constitution*, always a lucky ship, managed to take advantage of a temporary absence of the three frigates that were watching her and slipped to sea. The *President* made a similar attempt, but fared badly.

[1] James, vi. 299 (ed. 1837).

The *Peacock* and *Hornet* were lying with her, all three intending to start on a cruise for the East Indies, where they hoped to do much damage to British trade. The blockading squadron off the port consisted of the *Majestic*, 56, Captain John Hayes, with long 32-prs. on the main-deck, and 42 pr. carronades on the spar-deck, the *Endymion*, 40, Captain Henry Hope, carrying twenty-six 24-prs. on her main-deck, and twenty-two 32-pr. carronades and two bow-chasers on her spar-deck, with a crew of about three hundred and fifty men; and the two 38-gun frigates *Pomone*, Captain John Richard Lumley, and *Tenedos*, Captain Hyde Parker (3). On January 14th, 1815, a severe snow-storm blew them off the coast. Hayes was sure that the *President* would take advantage of their absence to slip out; and he shaped his course back with a view to the course which the escaping American would be apt to take.[1] The event justified his judgment.

The *President* had tried to put to sea in the gale, but she struck on the bar, where she beat heavily for an hour and a half, springing her masts and becoming so hogged and twisted that she would have put back to port if the storm had not blown so furiously as to render it impossible.[2] Before daylight next morning, Sandy Hook bearing W.N.W., fifteen leagues distant, she ran into the British

[1] Letters of Rear-Adm. the Hon. Sir Henry Hotham, Jan. 23rd, 1715, and Captain Hayes, Jan. 17th, 1815.

[2] Letters of Decatur, Jan. 18th and March 6th, 1814; Report of court-martial, April 20th, 1815.

squadron, and a headlong chase followed. During the early part of the day, when the wind was still strong, the powerful *Majestic* went better than any of the other ships, and fired occasionally at the *President* without effect. The *Pomone* towards noon began to gain rapidly, and would have overtaken the *President* had she not been sent to investigate the *Tenedos*, which turned up in an unexpected quarter, and was mistaken for another American ship. In the afternoon the wind became light and baffling, and the *Endymion* forged to the front and gained rapidly on the *President*, which was making a large amount of water in consequence of the injuries which she had received while on the bar. For three hours the ships occasionally interchanged shots from their bow and stern chasers. At about half-past five the *Endymion* drew up close, and began to pour in her broadsides on the *President's* starboard quarter, where not a gun of the latter would bear. For half an hour the *President* bore the battering as best she might, unable to retaliate; and she did not like to alter her course, lest she should lessen her chance of escape. Moreover, Decatur expected the *Endymion* to come up abeam. But Captain Hope kept his position by yawing, not wishing to forfeit his advantage. In this he was quite right, for the *President* suffered more during the half-hour when she had to endure the unreturned fire of her opponent than during the entire remainder of the combat. At six o'clock Decatur

found his position unbearable, and kept off, heading to the south. The two frigates ran abreast, the Americans using the starboard, the British the port, battery. Decatur tried to close with his antagonist, but the latter, being both a lighter and a swifter ship, hauled up and frustrated the attempt. The *President* then endeavoured to dismantle the British frigate, and thus get rid of her. In this she was successful. The *Endymion's* sails were cut from her yards, and she fell astern, the fire gradually dying away on both sides. The last shot was fired from the *President*.[1] Three hours afterwards, at eleven o'clock, the *Pomone* caught up with the *President*, and gave her two broadsides, which killed and wounded a considerable number of people. The *Endymion* was out of sight astern. Decatur did not return the fire, but surrendered, and was taken possession of by the *Tenedos*. He delivered his sword to Captain Hayes of the *Majestic*. In the *President* twenty-four were killed, and fifty wounded;[2] in the *Endymion* eleven were killed and fourteen wounded. Two days afterwards, in a gale, all three of the *President's*, and two of the *Endymion's* masts went by the board, and the *Endymion*, in addition, had to throw overboard her quarter-deck and forecastle guns.

[1] Log of *Pomone*, 'Naval Chronicle,' xxxiii. 370.

[2] Neither Hope nor Hayes in his letter gives details of the loss suffered by the *President*. James (vi. 365, ed. 1837), without specifying his authority, says that the *President* lost 35 killed and 70 wounded. — W. L. C.

This was an important success for the British. It was won by the vigilance of Captain Hayes, and the foresight of the British in stationing ample blockading squadrons off the harbours where the American frigates lay. The *Endymion* was a much lighter ship than the *President*, and could not be expected to capture her, for the *President* had a hundred more men in crew, two more guns in broadside on the main-deck, and 42's instead of 32's on the spar-deck. What Captain Hope could do he did; that is, hang on the quarter of an enemy who had no choice but flight, pouring in broadsides which could not be returned, and then, when he did engage, keep up the battle as long as possible, and do as much damage as he could, before dropping out of the combat. The relative loss is of course no criterion of the merits of the fight, because the *President* was trying to escape. She did not attempt to return the earliest and most destructive broadsides of the *Endymion*, and afterwards devoted her attention chiefly to the effort to unrig her opponent, while part of her loss was caused by the two unreturned broadsides of the *Pomone*. So far as the *Endymion* is concerned, Decatur seems to have done all he could, and no severe censure could be passed on him for surrendering when attacked by a fresh frigate, with another close astern. It certainly seems, however, that it would have been worth his while to try at least a few broadsides on the *Pomone*. A lucky shot might have taken out

one of her masts and then he would have had a chance to dispose of the *Tenedos* and make good his escape. Of course it was not much of a chance, but there were plenty of captains in both the British and the American navies who would certainly have taken advantage of it.

After escaping from Boston, the *Constitution*, 44, Captain Charles Stewart, went to Bermuda, thence to the Bay of Biscay, and finally towards Madeira. On February 20th, 1815, the latter island bearing W.S.W. 60 leagues, she encountered two British ships, the frigate-built *Cyane*, 22, Captain Gordon Thomas Falcon, and the flush-decked *Levant*, 20, Captain the Hon. George Douglas. The *Cyane* carried twenty-two 32-pr. carronades on her main-deck, and, on her spar-deck, two long 6's, eight 18-pr. carronades, and a 12-pr. boat carronade. The *Levant* carried eighteen 32-pr. carronades, and two long 9's, together with a 12-pr. boat carronade. The *Cyane* had about 170, and the *Levant* about 130 in crew. The *Constitution* carried about 450 men.

The two ships together could not be considered as powerful as a 38-gun frigate like the *Java* or the *Guerrière*, which the *Constitution* had already captured. Nevertheless the two British captains very gallantly, but not very discreetly, came to the conclusion to try their luck with the *Constitution*. Five years earlier two such vessels, the *Rainbow* and the *Avon*, had fought a draw with the French 40-gun frigate *Néréide*, the odds against them being just

about as heavy as against the *Cyane* and *Levant;* but on this occasion the two small craft had to deal with a much more formidable antagonist than any French frigate; and nothing in their own skill, or in the events of the preceding three years of warfare with the Americans, warranted their making the experiment.

The *Constitution* came down off the wind, while the two ships hauled close to the wind to try to weather her, so as to delay action until after nightfall, when they hoped that the darkness would favour their manœuvres. The frigate came down too fast, however, and the British stripped to fighting canvas, and stood on the starboard tack, the *Levant* a cable's length ahead of the *Cyane.* The *Constitution's* long guns would have enabled her to cut the two craft to pieces without damage to herself, as she was to windward; but this would have involved the risk of one or the other of them escaping; and she ranged up to windward of them, with the *Levant* on her port bow and the *Cyane* on her port quarter, close enough for the marines to begin firing soon after the engagement began.[1] There was a bright moon, but the smoke hung so heavily that at one time the firing ceased, the antagonists not being able to distinguish one another. There was some dexterous manœuvring, all three ships endeav-

[1] Letter of Captain Charles Stewart, May 20th, 1815; Log of *Constitution* Feb. 20th, 1815; 'Naval Chronicle,' xxxiii. 466; Niles, viii. 219, 363, 383.

ouring to rake or avoid being raked, and at 6.50 P.M., just forty minutes after the beginning of the action, the *Cyane* submitted and was taken possession of.

When the prize had been manned, Stewart made sail after her consort, which had run off to leeward. Captain Douglas had only gone out of the combat to refit, however, and, as soon as he had rove new braces, he hauled to the wind and stood back in search of his consort, an act of loyal gallantry which should not be forgotten. At 8.50 P.M.[1] he met the huge frigate, and passed under her battery, the *Constitution* and *Levant* going in opposite directions and exchanging broadsides. Finding that the *Cyane* had surrendered, and it being, of course, utterly impossible for a ship of his force to fight the *Constitution*, Douglas crowded all sail to escape, but was overtaken and captured half an hour afterwards. Of the 302 men on board the British ships, 41 were killed or wounded;[2] of the 451 men on board the *Constitution*, 15 were killed or wounded, and she was hulled eleven times, more often than by either the *Guerrière* or the *Java*. She was of such superior force that only a very real inferiority of skill on her part would have enabled her enemies to make it a drawn combat. As a matter of fact both sides fought well; but the *Constitution* captured her foes

[1] The time given in the British accounts is 8.30 P. M., and the time of striking at 10.30 P. M. — W. L. C.

[2] The *Levant* had 6 killed and 16 wounded; the *Cyane*, 6 killed and 13 wounded. — W. L. C.

without suffering any material loss or damage. The gallantry of the two British captains was conspicuous, but they did not show good judgment in engaging, for, as has been said, there was nothing in their experience to justify the belief that their conduct would result otherwise than it did, — that is, in an easy victory for their antagonist.[1]

Stewart took his prizes to the Cape de Verde Islands, and anchored in Porto Praya on March 10th. A hundred of the prisoners were landed to help fit out a brig which was taken as a cartel. Next day the weather was thick and foggy, with fresh breezes, and at noon the upper canvas of a large vessel was suddenly made out, just above the fog bank, sailing towards the harbour. Immediately afterwards the canvas of two other ships was discovered, and it became evident that all three were heavy frigates. In fact they were the very three ships which had blockaded the *Constitution* off Boston: the *Leander*, 50, Captain Sir George Ralph Collier, K. C. B.; the *Newcastle*, 50, Captain Lord George Stuart; and the *Acasta*, 40, Captain Alexander Robert Kerr.[2] Captain Stewart knew that the neutrality of the port would not save him, and that there was not a minute to lose if he wished to escape. As it was,

[1] Captains Douglas and Falcon were tried on board the *Akbar*, at Halifax, on June 28th, 1815, for the loss of their ships, and were most honourably acquitted. — W. L. C.

[2] Log of *Constitution*, March 11th, 1815; Letters of Lieut. Hoffman, April 10th, and of Lieut. Ballard, May 2nd; Marshall's 'Naval Biography,' ii. 533.

only the perfect training of his officers and men enabled him to get out. Signalling to his prizes to follow him, he cut his cables, and, in less than ten minutes from the time when the first frigate was seen, all three vessels were standing out of the harbour, the *Levant* being commanded by Lieutenant Hoffman, and the *Cyane* by Lieutenant Ballard. The prisoners on shore promptly manned a Portuguese battery and delivered a furious, but ill-directed fire at the retreating *Constitution*, *Levant*, and *Cyane*. They stood out of the harbour in that order on the port tack, all to windward of the British squadron. The Americans made out the force of the strangers correctly, and the *Acasta* discerned the force of the Americans with equal clearness; but the *Leander* and *Newcastle* mistook the two sloops for American frigates — an error, by the way, which the American Captain Rodgers had once committed in regard to a couple of British ships which he encountered, a sloop and a little 12-pr. frigate.

The British ships made all sail in chase, the *Newcastle* and *Leander* on the *Constitution's* lee quarter, and the *Acasta* well to windward of them. In an hour the *Cyane* had fallen so far astern and to leeward that Captain Stewart signalled to Hoffman to tack lest he should be cut off. Hoffman did so, and escaped unmolested, no British ship following him. He took his prize safely to the United States. Half an hour later the *Newcastle* opened on the *Constitution*, but the shot fell short. Though so

close, the commanders of the two 50-gun ships still apparently mistook the *Levant*, which was a low flush-decked sloop, for an American frigate. At three o'clock she had sagged so as to be in the same position as that from which the *Cyane* had just been rescued. Accordingly, Captain Stewart signalled to her to tack. She did so, whereupon all three British ships tacked in pursuit. Such a movement is inexplicable, for, even had the *Levant* been a frigate, the rearmost 50-gun ship alone would have been enough to send after her, while the other two should not have abandoned the chase of the *Constitution*. It is said that there was a mistake in the signalling, but the blunder was never satisfactorily explained. At any rate, Stewart got off in safety, and, when he learned of the peace, returned to New York.

Meanwhile Lieutenant Ballard took the *Levant* back to Porto Praya, and anchored a couple of hundred yards from a heavy battery on the shore. The event justified the wisdom of Captain Stewart in not trusting to the neutrality of the port. All three British frigates opened upon the *Levant* as soon as they got into the harbour, while the British prisoners on shore fired the guns of the battery at her. The *Levant* was at anchor, and did not resist; and the gunnery of her assailants was so bad that not a man in her was killed by the broadsides of the three heavy frigates, though she was a stationary target in smooth water. The chief effect of the fire was to damage the houses of the Portuguese town.

A week after the *President's* effort to run the blockade out of New York, the *Peacock* and *Hornet* made the same attempt, with more success. On January 22nd a strong north-westerly gale began to blow, and the two sloops at once prepared to take advantage of the heavy weather. They passed the bar by daylight under storm canvas, the British frigates lying-to in the south-east, in plain sight from the decks of the sloops. A few days out they parted company, intending to meet at Tristan d'Acunha.

The *Hornet* was then under the command of Captain James Biddle, and she had on board a crew of about one hundred and forty men.[1] She reached the island on the 23rd of March, and was about to anchor, when she made out a strange sail, which proved to be the British brig-sloop *Penguin*, 18, Commander James Dickinson (3), with a crew of one hundred and thirty-two men, she having taken on board twelve extra marines from the *Medway*, 74. The *Hornet* carried twenty guns, all 32-pr. carronades, except two long 12's for bow-chasers. The *Penguin* carried nineteen guns: sixteen 32-pr. carronades, two long 6's as bow-chasers, and a 12-pr. carronade. The difference in force was tri-

[1] Her muster rolls, in the Treasury Department at Washington, show that when she left New York she had about 146 officers and crew all told, including 20 marines; but she had manned a prize. The same rolls show the names of 122 prisoners which she took out of the *Penguin;* and ten of the *Penguin's* crew were killed in the fight or died immediately afterwards.

fling, but such as it was, it was in favour of the Americans.

The two ships began action at 1.40 P.M., within musket-shot of one another, running on the starboard tack, the *Penguin* to windward.[1] After a quarter of an hour of close action Commander Dickinson put his helm a-weather to run his adversary aboard. Almost at the same moment he was mortally wounded, and the first lieutenant, James M'Donald, endeavoured to carry out his intentions. The *Penguin's* bowsprit came in between the *Hornet's* main and mizen rigging, but the sea was very rough, and no attempt at boarding was made. As the *Hornet* forged ahead, the *Penguin's* bowsprit carried away her mizen shrouds, stern davits, and spanker boom, and the brig then hung on the ship's starboard quarter, so that none of the big guns could be used on either side. A British officer called out something which Biddle understood to be the word of surrender. Accordingly, he directed his marines to cease firing, and jumped on to the taffrail, but was himself at once shot and wounded rather severely in the neck by two of the marines on the *Penguin's* forecastle, both of whom were killed in another moment by the marines of the *Hornet*. As the ships drew apart the *Penguin's* foremast went overboard. Her hull was riddled,

[1] Biddle's letter, March 25th, 1815; M'Donald's letter, April 6th, 1815; Vice-Adm. Tyler to Commander Dickinson, Jan. 3rd, 1815; James, vi. 498; Niles, viii. 345.

and most of the guns on her engaged side were dismounted, while thirty-eight of her men were killed or wounded.[1] Thereupon, she struck her colours at two minutes past two, but twenty-two minutes after the first gun had been fired. In the *Hornet* one man was killed, and ten were wounded, chiefly by musketry fire, for not a round shot struck her hull. Next day Biddle destroyed his prize.

This was the last regular action of the war. In it the British displayed their usual gallantry, but it is astonishing that their gunnery should have continued so bad. Dickinson laid down his life for the flag which he served; and when a man does that it is difficult to criticise him; but the gunnery of the *Penguin* was certainly as poor as that of any of the British ships in 1812. The *Hornet* showed the utmost efficiency in every way. There was no falling-off from her already very high standard of seamanship and gunnery.

Next day the *Peacock* joined the *Hornet*, and on April 2nd the two started for the East Indies. On the 27th of the month they made sail after what they supposed to be an Indiaman, but, when they got close, discovered, to their consternation, that she was the *Cornwallis*, 74, Captain John Bayley, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Sir George Burl-

[1] The *Penguin* had 6 killed, including Commander Dickinson, 4 mortally wounded, and 28 otherwise wounded, including Lieutenant John Elwin, Master's Mate John Holmes Bond, and Midshipman John Noyes. James Dickinson (3) was a Commander of October 21st, 1810. — W. L. C.

ton, K.C.B. The *Peacock*, a very fast vessel, was speedily out of danger, but the *Hornet* endured a forty-eight hours' chase.[1] By daylight of the 29th the 74 was within gunshot of the sloop, and opened fire upon her. Throughout the early part of the day the *Hornet* was several times on the very edge of capture. More than once she was within fair range of the 74's long guns, and the latter not only used her bow-chasers but also hauled up to deliver broadsides. On each occasion Biddle gained a brief respite by lightening ship, throwing overboard by degrees all his spare spars, stores, anchors, shot, boats, ballast, and all the guns but one. The guns of the *Cornwallis* were very unskilfully served, and but three shot got home. In the afternoon the sloop was saved by a shift in the wind, which brought her to windward; and, as it blew fresher and fresher, she got further ahead. When day broke the two-decker was hull down astern, and, shortly afterwards, abandoned the pursuit.

The *Peacock* rounded the Cape of Good Hope and captured four great Indiamen, very valuable prizes. Then on the 30th of June, in the Straits of Sunda, she fell in with the East India Company's cruiser *Nautilus*, a brig of not half her force.[2] The *Nautilus* informed Captain Warrington of the peace, but Warrington chose to disbelieve the information, and ordered the brig's commander Lieutenant Charles

[1] Biddle's letter of June 10th; Log of *Hornet*.

[2] 'History of the Indian Navy,' by Charles Rathbone Low, p. 285.

Boyce, I.N., to haul down his colours. This the latter refused to do until a couple of broadsides had been exchanged, when he surrendered, having had fifteen men killed or wounded. The *Peacock* was not even scratched. There was no excuse whatsoever for Warrington's conduct. It was on a par with that of Commander Bartholomew, of the British sloop *Erebus*, mentioned above.

This was the last expiring sputter of the war. Peace had been declared; and, while Warrington was cruising in the far Indian seas, his countrymen at home were building and launching ships of the line, and Decatur was preparing to lead a squadron against the Moorish pirates.

The United States' Navy ended the war far stronger than it had begun it; and in the list of the United States' vessels for 1815 there appeared two novel engines of destruction, the forerunners of their kind, the heralds of the revolution which, fifty years later, opened a new era in naval warfare. In the United States' Navy List for 1815 appeared the names of the war-steamer *Fulton*, and of the *Torpedo*. During the war several efforts had been made by the Americans to destroy British vessels with torpedoes, but nothing had been accomplished beyond making some ships wary about venturing into good anchorage, especially in Long Island Sound. The *Fulton*, with her clumsy central wheel concealed from shot by a double hull, with scantling so thick that light guns could not harm her, and with, instead of broadside

batteries of light guns, two 100-pr. columbiads on pivots, was the prototype of the modern steam ironclad.

The war had ended, and the treaty[1] left matters precisely as they were before the war began; yet it would be idle to say that, for either side, the war was not worth fighting. To Great Britain it was probably a necessary incident of the Napoleonic struggle, for neither the British statesmen of that day, nor the people whom they governed, realised either the power or the rights of the United States. To America it was certainly a necessary prerequisite for attaining the dignity and self-respect of a free nation. The war left enduring memories of glory, and courage, and love of country, which more than made up for the loss of blood. Moreover, the war taught certain lessons which should have been, although perhaps they were not, well pondered by the statesmen of the two countries, and especially by those who had, or have, to do with shaping the national policy of either. Nations must be prepared for war: lack of preparation, laxness in organisation, invite disasters which can be but partially repaired. The successes of the American cruisers show that no power can afford to lull itself to sleep

[1] A convention was signed at Ghent on December 24th, 1814, but the convention was only a compromise, which left undecided all the chief points upon which the two countries had been at issue, and which reserved certain questions for future negotiation. As has been seen, definite news of the peace did not reach outlying stations until two or three months later. — W. L. C.

by the dream of invincibility. A nation should see that its ships are of the best, and that the men who man them are trained to the highest point of efficiency. The terrific pressure of the British blockade on the American coast, and the utter impotence of America to break it, show, what has already been shown ten thousand times, that the assumption of a simple defensive in war is ruin. Success can only come where war is waged aggressively. It is not enough to parry the blows of the enemy. In order to win, the foe must himself be struck, and struck heavily

The sea-power of the British, the unceasing pressure of the British fleet, very nearly made the struggle a victory for Great Britain; but the triumphs of the American squadrons on the lakes, and of the frigates and sloops on the ocean, and the ruthless harrying of the British trade by the American commerce-destroyers, inflicted such severe punishment as to make the British more than willing to call the fight a draw.[1]

[1] The history of the Hartford Convention is proof enough of how near the United States were to disaster. The impression produced in Great Britain by the prowess of the American ships is shown in a letter from the British naval historian, William James, to George Canning, in 1827, when war was once more threatened. "One [merchant] says, 'We had better cede a point or two than go to war with the United States.' 'Yes,' says another, 'for we shall get nothing but hard knocks there!' 'True,' adds a third, 'and what is worse than all, our seamen are more than half afraid to meet the Americans at sea!' Unfortunately this depression of feeling, this cowed spirit, prevails very generally over the community, even

The man who is anxious to learn the lessons of history aright, and not merely to distort them for the gratification of his national pride, will do well to study the differences in comparative prowess shown in the single-ship fighting of the Americans, British and French, in 1780, 1798, and 1812 respectively. Readers of this history, on turning to the single-ship contests of the war of the American Revolution, will be struck by the fact that the British ships were then markedly superior to the American; whereas the difference between the former and the French was very slight. In 1798, the year in which America had a brush with France, a great change had taken place. At that time America had been forced to make reprisals at sea against the French, and three single-ship contests took place. American ships won twice against antagonists of inferior strength; and in a third case an American frigate fought a draw with a more powerful French frigate which, some time afterwards, was captured by a British frigate no stronger than her former American antagonist. Compared with their relative position in the preceding war, the French had fallen very far behindhand, and, while the British had kept their position of

among persons well-informed on other subjects, and who, were a British seaman to be named with a Frenchman or Spaniard, would scoff at the comparison." (Stapleton's Correspondence of George Canning, ii. 450). See also Lane-Poole's 'Life of Stratford Canning,' i. 302, to show how completely both sides accepted the fact that there was to be no repetition of the grievances, in the way of impressment and search, which had caused the war.

primacy, the Americans, leaping forward, had passed the French, and were close behind the leaders. In 1812 the relative positions of the English and French remained unchanged; but the Americans had forged still further ahead, and were better than the British.

Of course, there had been no change of national character or aptitude for the sea during this period. The simple facts were that, in the war of the American Revolution, the American ships were manned by officers and crews who were without the training of a regular service; and so, while occasionally individual ships did exceedingly well, they often did very badly. The French navy, on the other hand, was at a high point of perfection, with excellent ships, and well-trained captains and crews. Throughout that war, in the single-ship fighting, victory normally lay with the heavier vessel, whether she was British, Dutch or French. In the war of the French Revolution all that had changed. The Revolution had destroyed the discipline of the French crews and annihilated the old school of officers; while the enthusiasm with which it inspired the men could not at sea, as it did on land, in any way take the place of the lack of years of thorough training. On the other hand, the Americans had at last established a regular war navy, and their ships were officered by men carefully trained to their profession. During the next dozen years the French, constantly beaten by the British, were unable to develop an equality of prowess with the latter;

and the British accustomed to almost invariable victory over foes who were their inferiors alike in gunnery and seamanship, neglected their own gunnery, and sank into a condition of ignorant confidence that, even without preparation, they could "pull through somehow." The small American navy meanwhile was trained by years of sea-service, including much scrambling warfare with the Algerians; and the American captains, fully aware of the formidable nature of the foe whom they were to meet, drilled their crews to as near perfection as might be. In such circumstances, they distinctly outmatched their average opponents, and could be encountered on equal terms only by men like Broke and Manners.

The lesson from this is so obvious that it ought not to be necessary to point it out. There is unquestionably a great difference in fighting capacity, as there is a great difference in intelligence, between certain races. But there are a number of races, each of which is intelligent, each of which has the fighting edge. Among these races, the victory in any contest will go to the man or the nation that has earned it by thorough preparation. This preparation was absolutely necessary in the days of sailing ships; but the need for it is even greater now, if it be intended to get full benefit from the delicate and complicated mechanism of the formidable war engines of the present day. The officers must spend many years, and the men not a few, in

unwearied and intelligent training, before they are fit to do all that is possible with themselves and their weapons. Those who do this, whether they be Americans or British, Frenchmen, Germans, or Russians, will win the victory over those who do not.

Doubtless it helps if the sailormen — the sea mechanics, as they are now — have the sea habit to start with; and they must belong to the fighting stocks. But the great factor is the steady, intelligent training in the actual practice of their profession. Any man who has had to do with bodies of men of varied race origin is forced to realise that neither courage nor cowardice is a purely national peculiarity. In an American warship of the present day, the crews are ordinarily of mixed race origin, somewhat over half being American born; while among the remainder there are sure to be Scandinavians, Germans, men from the British Isles, and probably others, such as French Canadians or Portuguese. But the petty officers are sure to be drawn from all classes indiscriminately, simply because merit is not confined to any one class; and, among the officers, those whose fathers came from Germany or Ireland will be found absolutely indistinguishable from their brethren of old native American origin. The Annapolis education and the after-training have stamped the officers, and the conditions of actual sea-service in modern ships under such officers have stamped the men, with a common likeness. The

differences of skill, courage, application and readiness will not be found to coincide with the differences of race.

What is true of the ships of one sea power is as true of the navies of all sea powers. No education will fit a coward, a fool, or a weakling for naval life. But, as a rule, the war fleets of great nations are neither commanded nor manned by cowards, fools, and weaklings; and, among brave and intelligent men of different race-stocks, when the day of battle comes, the difference of race will be found to be as nothing when compared with differences in thorough and practical training in advance.

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